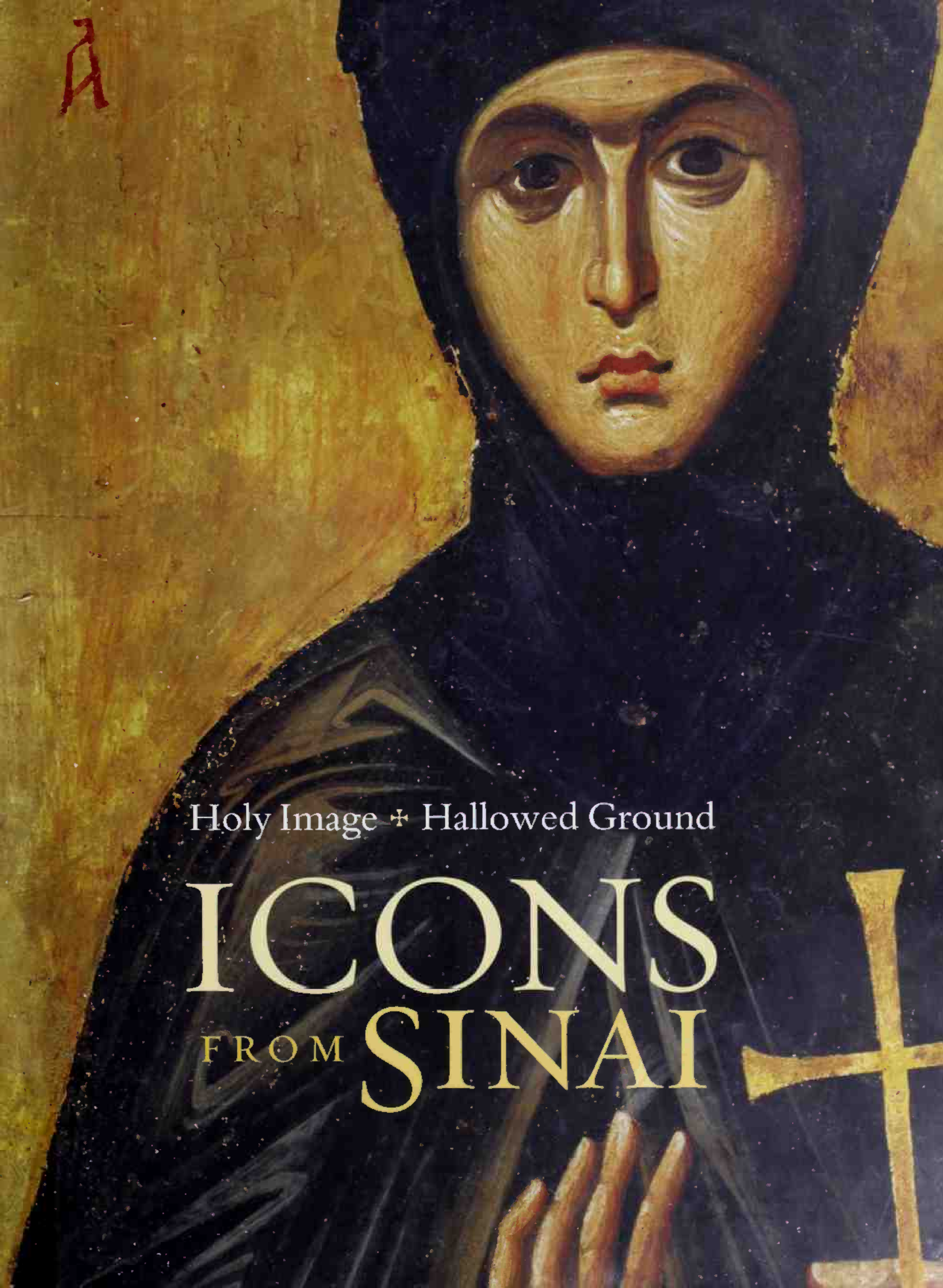
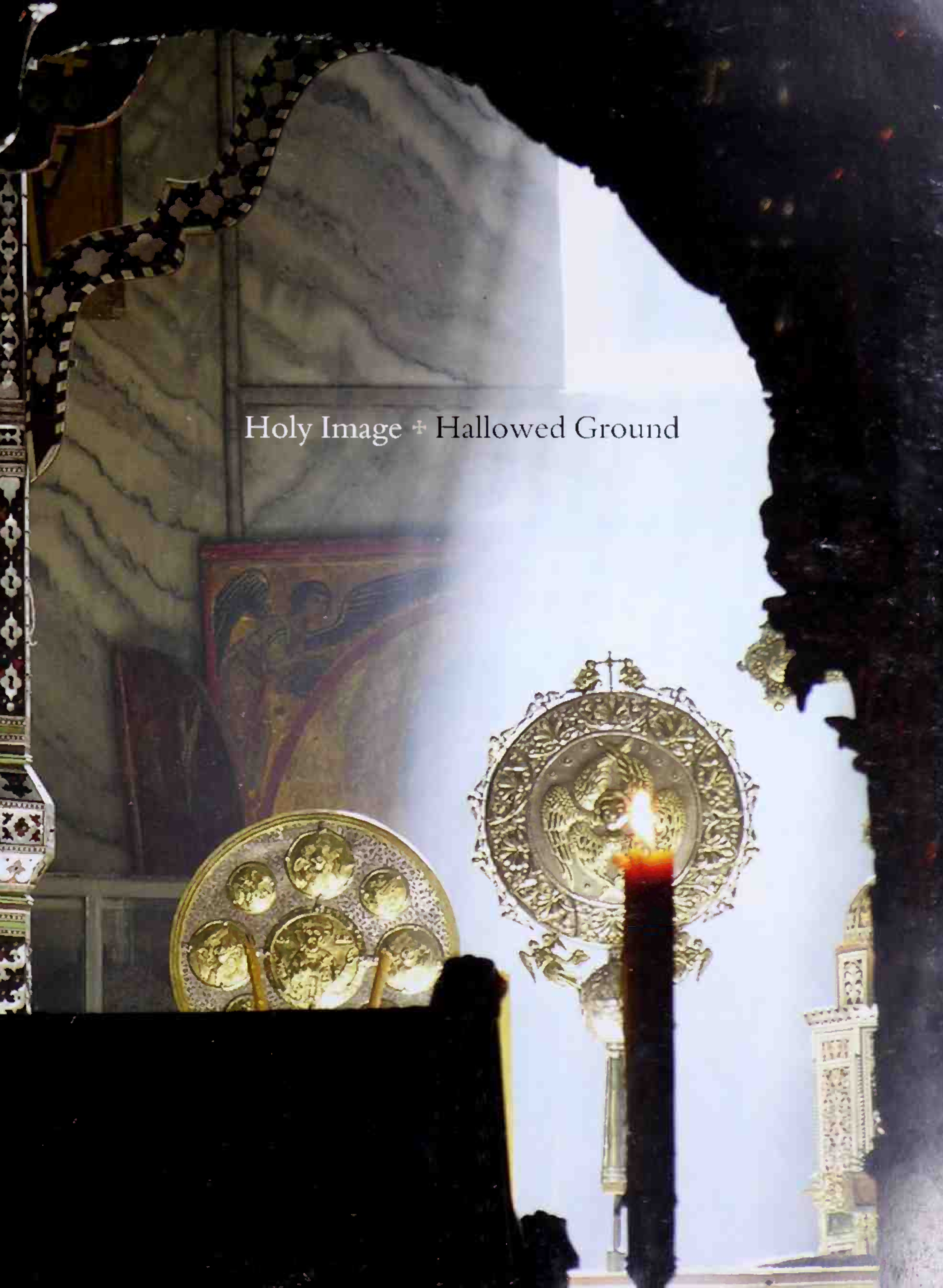


Holy Image ✛ Hallowed Ground

ICONS FROM SINAI



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Holy Image ✢ Hallowed Ground

ICONS FROM SINAI

EDITED BY ROBERT S. NELSON AND KRISTEN M. COLLINS

THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

ΤΟΘΕΟΒ

This publication is issued in conjunction with the exhibition *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, held at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, from November 14, 2006, to March 4, 2007.

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FRONT COVER: Saint Theodosia, early thirteenth century (detail, cat. no. 46).
FRONTISPIECE: View through iconostasis door, the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai; photo by Robert S. Nelson (detail, fig. 28).
PAGE II: Saint Macarius and a Cherub, thirteenth century (detail, cat. no. 44).
PAGES IV–V: Iacovos Moskos, View of Mount Sinai with Scenes of Monastic Life, 1700–1725 (detail, cat. no. 43).
PAGE VIII: Georgios Klontzas, Transfiguration with Scenes of Monastic Life, 1603 (detail, cat. no. 42).
PAGE X: View of passageway with a monk, Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai; photo by Bruce White.
BACK COVER: (top) The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai (detail, fig. 2); (bottom) Apse, Chapel of the Burning Bush, the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai (detail, fig. 70).
SPINE: Saint Peter the Apostle, sixth century (detail, cat. no. 1).

NOTE: Unless otherwise noted, inscriptions on objects illustrated in the catalogue are reproduced as they appear on the works themselves and include original scribal errors.

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Archbishop's Foreword

Moses, Moses. Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.
—EXODUS 3:4–5

GOD-TRODDEN MOUNT SINAI is forever sacred as the place where the great events and theophanies of the Old Testament fixed and sealed the history of humankind. Here, at the place of the Burning Bush, God instructed His elect servant Moses, and when He had revealed Himself ("I AM THAT I AM"), sent him to Pharaoh to deliver the Children of Israel and take them through the wilderness of Sinai to the Promised Land. Here is Mount Horeb with Sinai the summit, the peak of the Decalogue—the place where, in the midst of darkness and fire, God revealed to the great God-seer Moses the mystery of His Creation and His divine Law.

This mountain again received the grace of God "as a gentle breeze" with the coming of the Prophet Elias, and here holy men settled, who, longing for communion with God in silence and prayer, "abandoned the city and made a city of the wilderness." Thus the settlement of Christian hermits commenced by the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century at the place of the Burning Bush, beneath the mount of the Decalogue, and continued into the mountainous wilderness of the south Sinai.

Compunctionate prayer, tears of repentance, and purification of the heart preserved and augmented divine grace at this place, and this grace has sanctified those pilgrims who have come here out of piety through the centuries. In addition, a multitude of pilgrims have come here from the West, and the monastery has established and maintained beneficial friendly relations with them since the Middle Ages.

The healing ascetic life with its unceasing prayer does not bring salvation to only the ascetics themselves; it has contributed and is contributing to others in perpetuity through prayer and the creation of incomparable spiritual works, such as icons, manuscripts, and other sacred works of art that are treasured at Sinai.

Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai marks the first time an exhibition has focused exclusively on the icons and manuscripts of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai. Thanks are due to the co-curators of the exhibition, Professor Robert S. Nelson, Robert Lehman Professor of the History of Art at Yale University, and Kristen M. Collins, assistant curator, Department of Manuscripts at the Getty Museum, whose diligent efforts are reflected in this publication. Thanks are also due to Michael Brand, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum, and to his staff.

May all who have labored and all who visit this exhibition receive the grace and blessing of God. May the icons, manuscripts, and other sacred objects depicted here raise our thoughts from the things of this world to the experience of realities on high. Beholding the multicolored spectrum of the icons here below, may we ascend to the perception of the splendor of heaven in the uncreated light of the Triune Godhead.

On behalf of the Holy Council of the Fathers
Archbishop Damianos of Sinai
The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, Egypt

Director's Foreword

Icon painting in the Byzantine Empire was an ancient craft, yet it can appear stunningly modern to our eyes. For pious beholders, icons were more than representations of holy figures; they were expressions of prayer. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, Egypt, holds the finest collection of Byzantine icons and manuscripts in the world. In the exhibition *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai* the J. Paul Getty Museum is privileged to introduce the public to the compelling history of the monastery and the central role of the icon in the devotional life of monks and patrons.

Saint Catherine's is the oldest continuously operating Christian monastery in existence today, and some of the earliest remaining Byzantine icons still grace its community. Isolated in the Sinai desert at the foot of the mountain where Moses is said to have received the tablets of the Law, the monastery was sequestered from the larger part of the Byzantine Empire and escaped successive waves of iconoclasm that led to the destruction of icons across the empire. Its treasured collection thus preserves an unbroken tradition of icons and allows us to tell the story of icon painting and veneration from the sixth century to the present.

In recent years, under the dynamic leadership of His Eminence, the Archbishop Damianos of Sinai, the monastery has developed relationships with major cultural institutions and foundations throughout the world, in the interest both of better caring for and preserving its buildings and collection and of making them more accessible to scholars and the general public. The Getty Museum welcomes this opportunity to present the first exhibition devoted to Sinai as a collection and as a historical phenomenon.

The Getty's involvement with the monastery began with the expertise provided by the Getty Conservation Institute in the conservation of the apse mosaic and through a grant from the Getty Foundation. I wish to thank Deborah Marrow, then director of the Getty Foundation and now interim president and chief executive officer of the J. Paul Getty Trust. Thanks also to Tim Whalen, director of the Getty Conservation Institute; Joan Weinstein, acting director of the Getty Foundation; and Herbert Lucas, trustee emeritus, for introducing our curators to the Holy Fathers of Saint Catherine's and facilitating our first discussions with them.

This exhibition and catalogue represent an extraordinary effort by many dedicated individuals. I extend my thanks and gratitude to the co-curators of the exhibition, Robert S. Nelson, Robert Lehman Professor of the History of Art at Yale University, and Kristen M. Collins, assistant curator in the Department of Manuscripts at the Getty Museum, who together conceived the intellectual framework for the exhibition and this splendid catalogue. Kristen Collins's diplomacy and determination over several years helped to secure the most important loans, with the ongoing support and commitment of Thomas Kren, the Getty Museum's curator of manuscripts. Sincere appreciation is also extended to Quincy Houghton, assistant director for exhibitions and public programs, and Amber Keller, senior exhibitions coordinator, for their diligence in orchestrating a project of this scale and complexity; as well as to Galina Tirnanic, curatorial assistant in the Department of Manuscripts.

I would like to offer my appreciation to each of the contributors to the catalogue, as well as to conservators Tiarna Doherty, Nancy Turner, and Brian Considine, whose hard work and close observations provided invaluable information that enriched the work from which the authors were able to draw.

The exhibition and this catalogue would not have been possible without the generosity of His Eminence Archbishop Damianos of Sinai and the community of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, who kindly opened their doors to the curators and other members of the Getty staff. The Holy Fathers of Mount Sinai made accessible not only their art but also the monastery's liturgy, providing us with a better understanding of the religious life at Saint Catherine's, which the Getty Museum in turn is honored to be able to share with a wider audience. A special debt of gratitude is extended to Zahi Hawass, secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Egypt, who made it possible for us to exhibit these extremely rare, and rarely exhibited, works.

The Getty is also grateful for the participation of the other institutions that have generously lent their works to the exhibition: the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts, Kiev, Ukraine; the Collection of Saint Catherine of Sinai at Iráklion, Crete, Greece; Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.; and Galleria Estense, Modena, Italy.

We hope that through this exhibition and catalogue, viewers and readers alike will continue to be enriched and enlightened by these cherished icons and their important place in the history of religious imagery.

Michael Brand, Director
The J. Paul Getty Museum

Acknowledgments

To WORK SO CLOSELY with the community of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine and the extraordinary objects that make up *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, has been a great privilege and an honor. The same opportunity has afforded us the chance to work with a range of remarkable individuals from across the globe, whose generosity and creativity are evident throughout the exhibition and this catalogue.

First and foremost we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Holy Fathers at Saint Catherine's. The community did far more than make their icons available to us; they shared their time, their experiences and the celebration of the liturgy with the many members of the exhibition team who visited the monastery over the last several years. The fathers enriched our understanding of this monastery and provided invaluable insight into the role of icons in monastic life. We would like to offer particular thanks to His Eminence, the Archbishop Damianos for his guidance, his kindness, and his patience during the long process that led to this exhibition. We are grateful for the countless hours Father Porphyrios, *skevophylax*, spent with the Getty staff during research trips; for Father Justin's deep knowledge of matters both theological and technological; and for Father John Metaxas's wise counsel. We would also like to thank Father Daniel, former *skevophylax*; Father Pavlos, Superior; and Nikolaos Vadis, for their generous contributions to this project. Stergios Stassinopoulos and Nikolaos Smyrnakis of the Benaki Museum in Athens offered valuable advice on matters pertaining to the safe display of these icons, and Dinah McCabe facilitated important initial meetings with His Eminence, the Archbishop Damianos in New York and Athens.

This project has profited from the unflagging support and leadership of Michael Brand, director of the Getty Museum, and his predecessors Deborah Gribbon, former director, and William Griswold, former acting director. Even prior to his arrival at the Getty, Brand devoted considerable effort to the success of this exhibition. Crucial to the realization of this project have been the dedication and commitment of the many Getty staff members involved. In particular we would like to thank Quincy Houghton, head of exhibitions and public programs; Amber Keller, senior exhibition coordinator; Sally Hibbard, chief registrar; and Betsy Severance, registrar.

In 2001 Thomas Kren, curator of manuscripts; Elizabeth Teviotdale, then associate curator of manuscripts; and Robert S. Nelson initiated conversations with the monastery about a possible exhibition. Kren has continued to provide unwavering support for this project. His guidance, sound instincts and generosity of time and effort sustained this endeavor. Galina Tirnanic, curatorial assistant in the Department of Manuscripts, was responsible for maintaining the editorial standards of this catalogue and her many insights have contributed to the quality of the final result. She oversaw the editing of the Greek inscriptions for the catalogue and created gallery texts for the exhibition. Georgi Parpulov, former manuscripts intern, provided valuable archival research. We would also like to thank Elizabeth Morrison, associate curator of manuscripts, as well as Leslie Deleon, Brandi Franzman, and Robert Schindler for their assistance.

The work conducted by the three Getty conservators who made the journey to Sinai cannot be quantified: Tiarna Doherty, Nancy Turner, and Brian Considine contributed technical knowledge and expertise with their close observations on the works in the exhibition. Their energy, resourcefulness, and insights were a source of valuable assistance, both at Sinai and at home. In addition, Rita Gomez's careful work at the monastery facilitated the safe transfer of these objects to the Getty.

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We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Alison Glazier, acting head of interactive media at the Getty, and Lyn Goldfarb, documentarian, for the creation of a beautiful and evocative film for the exhibition. Thanks as well to the talented individuals of the film crew who accompanied us to the monastery in order to film the Holy Week services: Michael Chin, Doug Dunderdale, and Dean Hayasaka, as well as Vasileios Marinis, who provided translation and consulting.

We are especially indebted to our colleagues from outside institutions who contributed to this project, above all Helen Evans at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but also George Bisacca, Herb Moskowitz, and Mahrukh Tarapour. They generously shared the experience and insights born of their own work at Sinai.

At Dumbarton Oaks, Gudrun Bühl and Edward Keenan made possible the loan of the sixth-century liturgical silver, while Alice-Mary Talbot generously provided invaluable proofreading assistance with the Greek inscriptions in our catalogue.

Thanks go as well to the other lenders to the exhibition, for their generosity and willingness to contribute works that allowed us to more fully explain the history and significance of the monastery: at the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts in Kiev, Ms. Vira Vinogradova and Ms. Olena Victorivna Zhivkova; at the Thirteenth Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities in Crete, Mr. Michael G. Andrianakis, former director, and Paris Epitropakis, archaeologist; and at the Galleria Estense in Modena, Dott.ssa Maria Grazia Bernardini, *soprintendente*.

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Robert S. Nelson
Yale University

Kristen M. Collins
The J. Paul Getty Museum

Where God Walked and Monks Pray

Robert S. Nelson

PLACE

The Sinai is scorching hot in the summer, numbing cold in the winter, and parched always. By day, the searing light bedazzles the eyes and washes out the details of photographs. At night, a darkness, never experienced by urban dwellers, exposes a canopy of brilliant stars overhead. In the spring, sandstorms sweep across the desert from the west; snow falls in the higher elevations in the winter (fig. 2). To the south, luxury hotels line the Gulf of Aqaba and present an imaginary Orient to the sun starved. In the interior of the peninsula, however, the people and terrain belong to another world. A broad massif of pink granite and stark mountains replaces the flat, sandy coast. The sharp-edged igneous rock cuts unprotected hands and feet and sends foolish hikers back to established paths. The central Sinai is not a region for casual tourism. To visit, much less live there, requires determination and dedication.[1]

Through the wilderness of this peninsula wandered the ancient Israelites of the Bible after Moses led them out of Egypt and across the parted Red Sea. It is a wilderness with an accent on *wild*, the original sense of the word, before the Industrial Revolution, Romanticism, and ecology rendered the wilderness vulnerable, vanishing, and in need of human nurture. At the spiritual heart of the peninsula today is the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, erected by the Byzantine emperor Justinian in the sixth century (fig. 2). For centuries, its thick walls protected the monks and their church (fig. 3). Sheer mountain escarpments on two sides of the monastery throw it into deep shade late in the day (fig. 4). From within the monastery, these majestic mountains are a constant presence. In the late afternoon, the warm light of the setting sun sets the mountains' reddish stone on fire. Immediately to the west, a natural oasis and its cool green vegetation make a sharp contrast with the broad, brown desert plain of er-Raha that lies beyond (fig. 5), the principal means of access to the monastery.

At this place, tradition holds, Moses encountered a burning bush and the voice of God, as described in the book of Exodus:

> Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. [God said,] "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (EXOD. 3:1–5)

Figure 1 (opposite) Icon of James Adelphotheos with Liturgical Scroll, ca. 1200 (see fig. 115), by lamplight in the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 2 (opposite)
The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at the base of Jebel Musa, Mount Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Georg Gerster/Photo Researchers, Inc.

Figure 3 (above)
The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, from the northeast. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 4 (following pages)
The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, from Jebel Musa. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Later God spoke again to Moses and summoned him to receive the Ten Commandments where "the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai" (EXOD. 24:16). Descending with the tablets of stone, Moses saw that his people meanwhile had turned to worshipping a golden calf, and he broke the tablets in anger. Again God called Moses to Mount Sinai, where "the Lord descended in a cloud and stood with him there" (EXOD. 34:5) and inscribed a second set of tablets. All this took place on what the monks of Saint Catherine's monastery call "the God-trodden Mount of Sinai."

Christians have been coming to this harsh and isolated region since the second century to practice the ascetic life. In the 380s, the nun Egeria visited the Holy Land and the Sinai and wrote to her sisters in western Europe about what she observed. The beginning of her account has been lost, and the narrative opens well into the journey, with the approach to Mount Sinai:

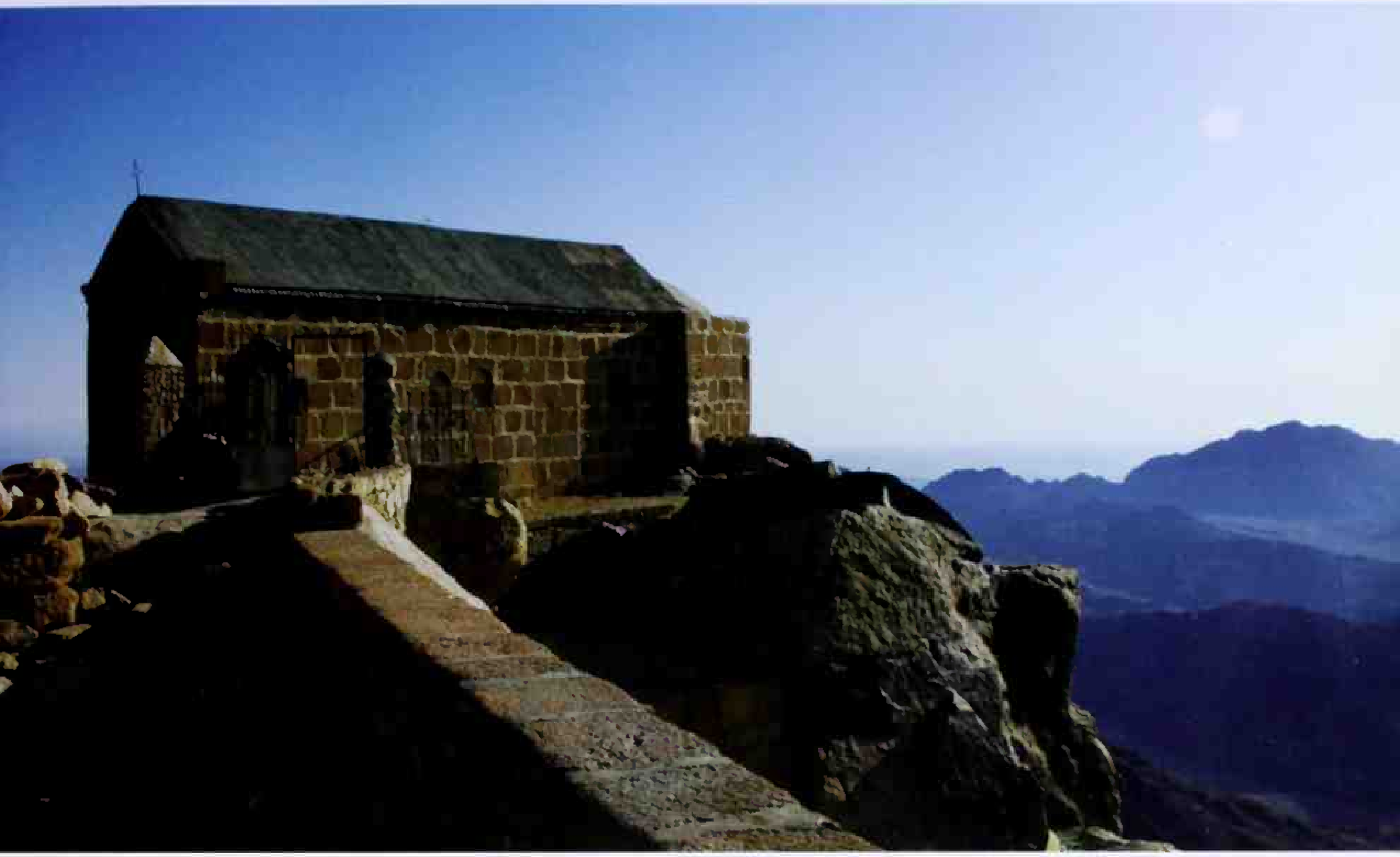
> In the meanwhile we were walking along between the mountains, and came to a spot where they opened out to form an endless valley—a huge plain, and very beautiful—across which we could see Sinai, the holy Mount of God. . . . When we arrived there our guides, the holy men who were with us, said, "it is usual for the people who come here to say a prayer when first they catch sight of the Mount of God," and we did as they suggested. . . . This is the huge flat valley in which the children of Israel were waiting while holy Moses went up into the Mount of God and was there "forty days and forty nights." It is the valley where the [Golden] calf was made. . . . [I]t was at the head of this very valley that holy Moses pastured the cattle of his father-in-law and God spoke to him twice from the burning bush.[2]

Figure 5 (above)
Plain of er-Raha from near the monastery. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 6 (left)
Plateau below the summit of Jebel Musa. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 7 (opposite, top)
Church on the summit of Jebel Musa. Photo: Kristen M. Collins.

Figure 8 (opposite, bottom)
Ancient stairs to Jebel Musa and the first of two arches. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.



A modern hotel fills the edge of that broad plain today (fig. 5), but its expanse is still impressive. In these mountains Egeria found monks, who welcomed her party and led them up Mount Sinai. The group climbed the western slope, and Egeria correctly remarked that the actual peak cannot be seen until arriving at a small plateau and oasis (fig. 6). At the base of the peak, where monks once grew fruits and vegetables near their cells, camels today rest from transporting tourists. Having reached the summit, the pilgrims read the account of Moses "on the very spot" where he received the tablets of the Law and celebrated the Eucharist in a small church, although not the sixth-century building seen today (fig. 7). Afterward the monks showed them the nearby cave of Moses. The group descended through the contiguous Mount Horeb (Jebel Sufsafeh), visited Elijah's cave in front of another church, and paused for more biblical readings, prayer, and the Eucharist. Making their way down the mountain, they did not have the advantage of the sixth- or seventh-century stone steps (fig. 8) that aid modern visitors and enable them to negotiate a rift that runs up the mountain next to the monastery (fig. 2).

The group arrived at the "place of the Bush," where the monastery would be built a century and a half later (fig. 4). There, at the base of the mountain, the fourth-century pilgrims found more monastic cells, a church, and the very Burning Bush from which God spoke. But by this time, Egeria reports, it was too late in the afternoon for the Eucharist, so

she and her company prayed in the church and at the bush, located "in front of the church in a very pretty garden which has plenty of excellent water."[4] Once more they read the appropriate biblical passages and thus merged the present and the past, the earthly and the heavenly, a well-established strategy of pilgrimage then and, in a more secular version, of tourism now. The pilgrims resided with the monks that night, rose early the next morning, celebrated the Eucharist in the church, and continued on to Pharan, the only significant town in the area.

Egeria's account is a valuable introduction to the region and evidence of its already well-established association with the events of Exodus. From her, we learn that there already was a church on the site and that the Burning Bush was "in front" of it and thus on its west side. If her description is accurate, the location of either the present church or the bush has changed since then.[5] The present Chapel of the Burning Bush, marking the site of the original bush, was attached to the back of the apse of the sixth-century church at a later date.[6]

The original entrance to the Justinianic monastery was through a gate on the west that was later closed for security. An inscription on its lintel addresses those entering with Psalm

Figure 9 (opposite and above) Nave of the church before vespers, Easter week. Photo. Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 10 (above right) Father Paul giving Communion in front of the iconostasis. The deacons, Fathers Neilos and Michael, attending. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

118:20: "This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it." The name of the patron, Emperor Justinian, follows. Walking farther into the monastery, the pilgrim encounters the upper facade of its sixth-century church (fig. 24). Stairs lead down to the entrance. There, to reinforce the message of the inscription on the outer wall of the monastery, the same verse from Psalms is repeated on the underside of the lintel of the main entrance to the church. Contemplating and walking past either inscription puts the pilgrim in the space of the righteous. A second sixth-century inscription on the perpendicular face of the church lintel greets visitors with an adaptation of the story of the Burning Bush (EXOD. 3): "The Lord spoke to Moses in this place, saying I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, I am who I am." On this very site, "I am who I am" spoke to Moses and continues to speak to whomever reads the inscription. This is indeed hallowed ground.[7]

From the threshold, the church that lies ahead presents an initially bewildering prospect in the late afternoon quiet before vespers (fig. 9). The bema is brightly lit by artificial light as

the clergy make their preparations. According to custom, the monks have left open the door of the seventeenth-century iconostasis during this, the first week after Easter. Beyond on the altar can be seen jeweled book covers and liturgical fans of post-Byzantine date (see fig. 27). Above is the justly famous apse mosaic of the Justinianic church (see fig. 15), now obscured by a large post-Byzantine crucifix and a plethora of hanging lamps that have been donated to the church over the past several centuries by many, including the czars of Russia. At the sides, massive white-clad columns support dark capitals carved from local stone. Unseen chapels surround the nave on the north and south sides and especially at the rear. In the northeast corner is the chapel of Saint James, where a triptych of Saint Catherine was lately displayed (cat. no. 58). The iconostasis of the chapel of the Holy Fathers in the opposite corner normally has an icon of the Transfiguration and monastic scenes (cat. no. 42). Joining the two side chapels and extending behind the apse of the church is the celebrated Chapel of the Burning Bush.

In the nave, dark post-Byzantine stalls for monks divide the space into smaller units and provide some seating. Everything else here is either an icon or a lighting device that enables icons to be seen, books read, and liturgies observed. Icons accompany all activities in the nave (fig. 10). Besides the iconostasis, icons ring the high pulpit in the upper right corner of the nave and can be seen on shelves on the side walls (fig. 11). Icons with the saints of each month hang from the twelve columns (figs. 12, 35). The icon for August is in this exhibition (cat. no. 31). Icons are also to be found along the walls of the narthex and in an excellent small museum that the monks have created amid the Justinianic rooms on the north side of the monastery. There normally reside many of the masterpieces in the exhibition. Other icons remain in devotional use in the bema of the church, its chapels, and the other small chapels scattered throughout the monastery. Storage rooms contain hundreds more, making the total holdings of the monastery by far the largest collection of Byzantine icons in the world.

The medieval pilgrim would have seen only a fraction of this great collection at one time. Yet what pilgrims did see controlled and structured access to the holy. Entering into the church through the west door to the narthex, a twelfth-century visitor encountered wooden doors carved by Egyptian artists in the contemporary style of Islamic art of the Fatimid period.[8] At the center of the left wing is the Transfiguration (fig. 13). The faceted compartments define the central star around Christ. Although Islamic in style, the doors are thoroughly Christian in content and are not the only example of Islamic art for Christian audiences in the monastery (see, for example, cat. no. 40). The Transfiguration faces its counterpart on the opposite door, the scene of Zachariah censing the altar (fig. 14). Both images prepare the pilgrim for what is to follow: the great mosaic of the Transfiguration and the performance of the liturgy below.[9]

Today the mosaic (fig. 31) can be seen only from oblique angles, but in the Middle Ages, it dominated the nave because the church had lower chancel barriers and no crucifix. The original sixth-century division, or templon, can be partially reconstructed from the meter-high parapet slabs in the apse area.[10] Columns bearing a simple horizontal entablature would have completed the structure, much as is represented in the paten from the Kaper Koraon Treasure (see cat. no. 37). In the high Middle Ages, other post-and-lintel constructions supported icons. The reconstructed templon in the exhibition suggests something of those medieval screens.

At the center of the apse mosaic stands the majestic figure of Christ (see fig. 16). His radiant white garments, hemmed in gold, are silhouetted against a deep blue mandorla. Five white beams of light extend across the dark blue mandorla to illumine the surrounding figures; two more beams radiate upward. The partially restored ray above Jesus' head leads to the cross on

Figure 11 (right)
Father Justin reading in the nave, a shelf of icons in the background. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 12 (below)
South side of the church, with calendar icons on the columns. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 13
Panel with the Transfiguration. Left wing of narthex door. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 14
Panel with Zachariah censing the altar. Right wing of narthex door. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

the underside of the arch above and farther to the medallion of the Lamb of God on the arch (fig. 15).[11] To the left and right of Jesus are the prophets Elijah and Moses. Below and closer to the all-important center, John and James kneel, and Peter, "heavy with sleep" (LUKE 9:32), struggles to awaken. Less alert than the other disciples, Peter is also the more earthbound; his right knee breaks through the outermost band of the ground line. Each apostle reacts to the luminous miracle of Jesus' garments becoming "as white as the light" (MATT. 17:2).

Above the conch of the apse, the mosaic decoration continues across the triumphal arch and the upper east wall of the church (fig. 15). Two elongated angels carry long cross-staffs and extend small globes to the Lamb of God. In the corners are medallion portraits usually identified as Mary and John the Baptist. The double windows above continue the powerful central axis of the apse and are framed with the same mosaic ornament as elsewhere. Next to them are scenes of Moses that are particularly relevant to the monastery. At the left, Moses removes his sandal before a bush, and on the opposite side, he bows his head and humbly receives the tablets from God.

To interpret these sixth-century mosaics and their relevance to the monastery, Jaś Elsner has successfully employed Saint Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses* and other early sources. For example, according to Gregory, the light of the Burning Bush will shine on those

> who continue in this quiet and peaceful course of life, . . . illuminating the eyes of our soul with its own rays. This truth, which was then manifested by the ineffable and mysterious illumination which came to Moses, is God.[12]

The light is truth and God, and it came to Moses, whom Gregory understood to be the prefiguration of Christ.[13] Appropriately sacralized, physical light—for these and other early authors—leads the devout to a light invisible to bodily eyes, the light of God.[14]

Elsner explains the somnolent Peter by recourse to the *Heavenly Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, the abbot of this very monastery in the later sixth century or early seventh century and the author of a spiritual guide read by laity as well as monks.[15] Both the abbot and his ladder are portrayed in icons and manuscripts at Saint Catherine's (cat. nos. 33, 47–49). In his

Figure 15
Triumphal arch with mosaic decoration. East wall above the apse. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Figure 16
Apse mosaic with the Transfiguration. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Figure 17 (left)
"On Sloth," a monk asleep over a book. In *The Heavenly Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, twelfth century. Sinai cod. 418 (cat. no. 33), fol. 132r.

Figure 18 (below left)
"On Sleep, Prayer, and the Singing in the Church of Psalms," monks asleep, sounding the semantron, and reading. In *The Heavenly Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, twelfth century. Sinai cod. 418 (cat. no. 33), fol. 170r.

Figure 19 (below right)
Sinai monk sounding the semantron
Photo: Bruce White.

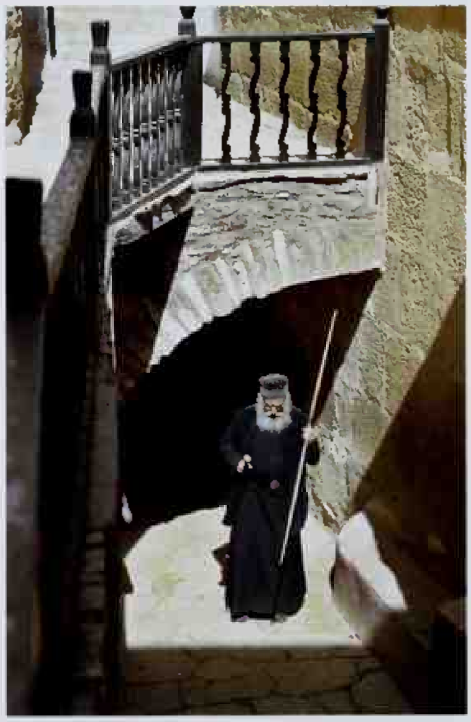


Figure 20
"On Alertness," monks praying. In *The Heavenly Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, twelfth century. Sinai cod. 418 (cat. no. 33), fol. 172r.

treatise, John writes about the dangers of the long vigils, the nocturnal observances common to monastic communities.[16] According to Climacus, sleep can hinder the prayer and must be combated. If the monk prevails, he will receive "light in his heart."[17]

These notions are visualized in several miniatures in the Sinai manuscript of the *Heavenly Ladder* (cat. no. 33). In one, a monk, eyes closed and slumped over a book, has fallen asleep while reading (fig. 17). He represents the sin of sloth. A three-part miniature illustrates the chapter on "sleep, prayer, and the singing in church of Psalms."[18] At the top (fig. 18), a monk pounds the semantron, a long wooden board, to summon the community for prayers, a practice continued to this day (fig. 19). Snug in his comfortable bed at the left, the bad monk does not stir, persuaded by a devilish figure to skip the first hymn of the morning. Opposite him is the "truly obedient" monk, who reads or chants and receives a crown from an angel. At the beginning of the discussion of alertness (fig. 20), monks dutifully pray, read, or chant in church and before "God our King [who] accepts and judges the offerings of each type in accordance with their intentions and abilities."[19]

John Climacus wrote these injunctions in the early seventh century while abbot of this monastery. He needed no more inspiration for the proper behavior of monks than his own experiences as a desert hermit, but the mosaic seen daily in the church may also have been a muse. Of the three disciples, the slumbering Peter makes the abbot's point most succinctly. Physically closest to viewers in the nave below, Peter is also the most earthbound. Like the monks, or the abbot for that matter, he struggles with sleep and thus could serve as a reminder of its dangers.

One spiritual guide and a mosaic evidently did not solve the problems with sleep, and other means were tried. The uncomfortable straight-back stalls in the nave represent the postmedieval solution. More elusive, perhaps, is the symbology of the many white balls—ostrich eggs—that are suspended above the silver chandeliers. According to a late-thirteenth-century Egyptian text, ostriches had to keep constant watch over their eggs, for if they were distracted for a moment, the eggs would be spoiled. The eggs thus remind monks once more that giving into sleep threatens their spiritual life.[20]

The dominant message of the scene of Transfiguration, however, involves not sleeping but hearing and seeing God. While the apostles were looking at Jesus transfigured and sanctified by light, a cloud appeared and "a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him'" (MATT. 17:5; also see MARK 9:7; LUKE 9:35). This aural and visual perception of the divine is shared with the two Moses scenes on the east wall above. They, in turn, contextualize and ground the theophanies in the physical spaces of Sinai (fig. 15). At the left, Moses takes off his sandal before a large bush that would have recalled the one just to the east of the apse. The large rock behind him, and especially the two sharp cliffs in the right scene, simulate the cliffs that surround and frame the monastery (figs. 2, 4), as Weitzmann understood.[21] This local contextualization, it may be argued, extended further to the physical space and light of the Sinai church.

LIGHT

In the nave, a single light source is powerfully present during the morning and evening services. At dawn, the sharp, piercing Sinai sun rises above the low hills east of the monastery until it shines through the double windows at the back of the church. Then intense shafts of light begin to illumine the dark nave, as the monks and pilgrims gather for matins and the liturgy (fig. 21). Through identical double windows, piercing light floods the nave for a few minutes in the late afternoon while monks chant the vespers antiphonally with other fathers across the narrow nave (fig. 22). The western light is unencumbered by objects or visual commentary, but the dawn's first rays stream past the crucifix, iconostasis, and ostrich eggs. Since the erection of the church in the sixth century, this beam of light has corresponded to the diagonal axis of the two Moses scenes at the top of the east wall and to the direction of God's hand twice depicted there (fig. 23).

This visualization of God's intervention does not have the same necessity in the two Moses panels. For the right scene, the narrative requires that God be shown delivering the tablets from above. However, when Moses takes off his sandals, he does so in response not to a voice from on high but to a command emanating from the bush before him. Thus, the hand of God in the left mosaic at best is redundant or at worst contradicts the biblical account and the reason the monastery exists, namely the Burning Bush. For that reason, an early-thirteenth-century icon (cat. no. 51), perhaps painted at the monastery, omits the hand of God and thereby more accurately depicts the prophet looking toward the large red bush in front of him.

Closer attention to the physical setting of the two Moses scenes resolves the contradiction. By their placement, both sacralize the early-morning light and merge the voice of God, represented by the extended hand, with the actual light of the window. This visual commentary on light finds support in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*. At the miracle of the Burning Bush, according to Gregory, both seeing and hearing were "illuminated by the rays of light," and "the light's grace was distributed to both senses."[22] Not ordinary illumination but truth and grace came from the bush and from the fire and smoke of God on Mount Sinai. In the sacred space of the monastery's nave, the mosaics render concrete the metaphor that God is Light, the basic message of both matins and vespers celebrated here every day for centuries.[23]

Though palpably present, the light that comes through the double windows on the east and west ends may not originally have been the only, or symbolically even the most important, in the church. Above both windows are smaller, centered openings at the summit of the gabled ends of the Justinianic church. The western window is cruciform (fig. 24), the eastern circular (fig. 25), and neither can presently be seen from the nave. A post-Byzantine ceiling obscures the sixth-century wooden trusses that support the steep roof. Carbon-14 dating attests to its sixth-century date, as do the names of Emperor Justinian, Empress Theodora, and architect Stephanos that are inscribed on the horizontal beams.[24] Was the roofing structure open from below and were the small windows on the eastern and western walls visible from the nave of the original church, or did the church always have a flat ceiling and a closed attic space?

For the grand church erected over the grave of Christ in Jerusalem, Emperor Constantine the Great expressed his willingness to pay for a gold coffered ceiling,[25] but whether truss roofs in more modest churches like Saint Catherine's were open from below or closed by a wooden ceiling cannot be definitively resolved, because the Sinai roof is unique and predates other surviving examples by centuries.[26] George Forsyth proposed that originally a flat ceiling was

Figure 21 (opposite).
Matins. Light beginning.
Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 22 (above left) Monks chanting at vespers. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 23 (above right) Mosaic with Moses untying his sandal and light coming through the window. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 24 (opposite, top left) West end of the church. Photo: Bruce White.

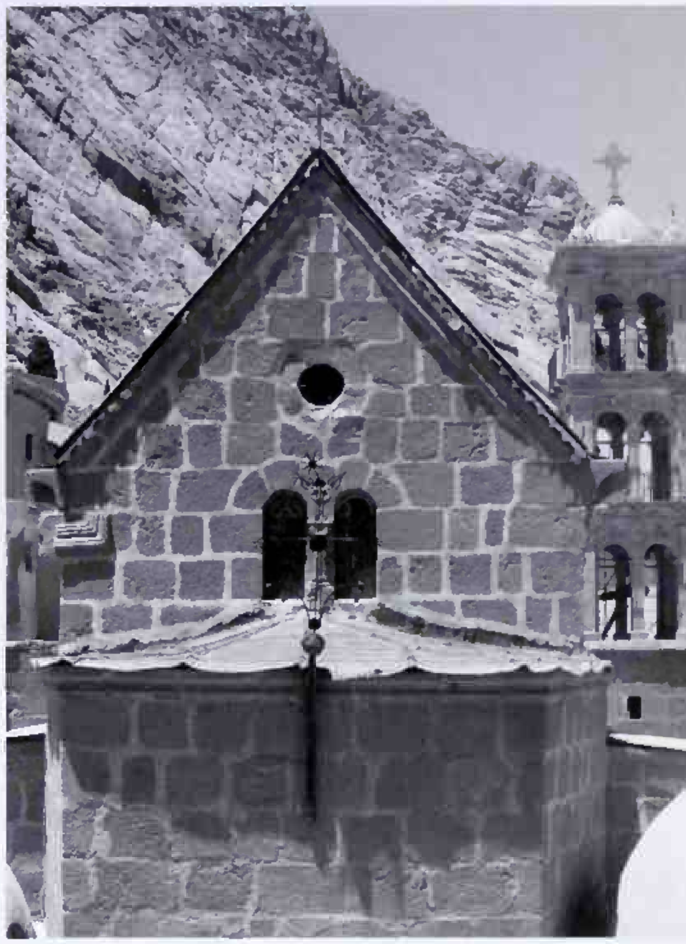
Figure 25 (opposite, top right) East end of the church. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 26 (opposite, bottom) Apse mosaic (destroyed) with Mother of God. Church of the Koimesis, Nicaea (Iznik), Turkey. (After Schmidt [illegible])

laid between these beams, so as not to obscure the inscriptions.[27] Patrik Reuterswärd assumed that the uppermost windows could be seen from the nave.[28] The form and effect of these windows supports the latter position. The cruciform window of the west facade (fig. 24) is carefully framed and flanked by palm trees, symbols of paradise that had local referents as well, and would have directed a cross-shaped beam of light into the nave at vespers, a service at which divine light is celebrated, as will be discussed shortly.

The corresponding window on the east is circular. Its meaning would be ambiguous, were it not for its position on the east wall and the general sense of eastern light in early Christianity. From an early date, morning light was associated with the divine. In the third century, the Alexandrian theologian Origen made reference to the custom of praying to the east, so as to face "where the true light rises."[29] Early medieval apse decorations made reference to this direction and time from the brilliant red clouds of dawn at the sixth-century apse of the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Rome[30] to the pre-Iconoclastic apse of the now-destroyed church of the Koimesis in Nicaea (fig. 26). There, from a segment of heaven, three rays of light project downward. The central one with the hand of God extends to the Virgin and Child in a manner that recalls the upper ray that connects Jesus in the Sinai apse to medallions of a cross and the Lamb of God above. Between the symbolic heaven and earth of the Nicaean apse is a verse from Psalms (109:3) that voices the hand of God and defines the time of day: "I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning."[31]

At the eastern end of the Sinai church, light, both real and depicted, is the central theme. The apse mosaic forcefully renders present the brilliant light that changed the figure of Christ and, radiating outward, caused his divinity to be known to the three disciples and to all who see the mosaic. The white beams projecting from Jesus are traditional but also call to mind the



shafts of early morning light in the church (figs. 21, 23). The vertical axis of the apse presents an important theological hierarchy from a medallion with the prophet David in the lower border of the mosaic, through the transfigured Jesus and the ray above him, to the gold cross in the medallion and the Lamb of God on the wall, past the double windows, and ending in the circular window presently visible only on the exterior (fig. 25). In both mosaics at the top of the wall, Moses looks to the hand of God in a segment of heaven, represented as coming from a point in between and above both panels, a position that more or less coincides with a source of actual light. As the highest window on the east wall, it would be the first to catch the morning rays and to illumine the imperial inscriptions on the wooden tie beams high above the nave, and thus it would have greater visual prominence than the lower double windows (figs. 21, 25). The heretofore unnoticed circular window thus becomes the place where mosaic, building, space, light, and liturgy come together.

The play of morning light in the church does not end with the first rays of the day. When the sun rises higher into the sky, the lowest windows on the east wall gradually illumine the bema and altar (fig. 27). While the nave is still dark and candles still lit, the initial shafts of light strike the altar, silhouetting the liturgical objects (fig. 28). Slowly altar, clergy, and their glorious vestments emerge from the dark, and the gold embroidery of the altar covering glistens in the morning

Figure 27 (opposite)
Altar as dawn breaks. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 28 (above)
Light and liturgical objects seen through the iconostasis door. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

light (fig. 29). The sharp rays of the desert intensify until the entire bema is saturated with strong light (fig. 30) that reflects off the marble walls and metallic objects and illumines portions of the apse mosaic (fig. 31). Poetic, mystical, or spiritual—depending on one's sensibility—the changing natural light in the church is stunning and unforgettable.

Many or most rites, however, take place at night, necessitating artificial light. Since antiquity, Byzantine churches have been equipped with valuable inventories of lighting devices. Before the legalization of Christianity in 313, private house churches were equipped with lamps, torches, and candlesticks.[32] Afterward, when worship became more public and ceremonial, grander and more numerous means of illumination were required. The emperor Constantine the Great met those needs. To the cathedral of Rome, the church of Saint John Lateran, he gave candelabra, chandeliers, and lamps made of gold, silver, and bronze and designated specific endowments to pay for their maintenance.[33] That expense could be significant, as much as a third of a church's income, according to a sixth-century source.[34] In an average early Byzantine church, lamps of various sorts greatly outnumbered liturgical vessels for the altar.[35]

Figure 29 (right)
Priest and deacon at the altar
Photo: Robert S. Nelson

Figure 30 (opposite)
Altar in full light
Photo: Robert S. Nelson

Figure 31
Apse mosaic in the early morning light. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Many lighting devices in the early period took the form of polycandela, flat openwork frames that held small glass lamps and were suspended from long chains. Dumbarton Oaks possesses beautiful sixth-century examples in silver,[36] but Justinian's great church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was once equipped with even grander versions, to judge from contemporary descriptions. A ring of polycandela hung from the cornice of its vast dome, and single lamps hung from the arches of the side aisles in a manner similar to that in a miniature in the early Arabic Gospel book shown here (see cat. no. 32, page 200).[37] Minus the upper story, the church depicted there resembles the Sinai basilica.

Justinian may well have provided lighting devices for his foundation in the Sinai, but if he did, they have been lost. Yet the monastery does preserve a rare example of a later Byzantine candelabrum (cat. no. 39), as well as a pair of Islamic lamp stands (one of which is cat. no. 40). The latter's formulaic Arabic inscriptions are standard for the period and do not compromise the religious function of the object. Such a lamp stand could have been donated by a pious pilgrim or purchased by the monastery at a Cairo market.

Floor lights are attested from the early Byzantine period, and the two in the exhibition represent a continuation of that earlier tradition with updated ornament. Both are similar in height to a sixth-century lamp or candle stand now in Virginia[38] and, like it, rest on a base with three feet. The articulation and decoration of the shafts differ, however. The visually striking Byzantine candelabrum has a more sculptural shaft, embellished with medallion portraits of military saints. Its circular collar of candles made a strong light source, and the holy warriors, religious icons as much as any other in the exhibition, symbolically protected the light and the icons it illumined. In the exhibition, both floor lights stand before the icons on the chancel barrier like later versions at the monastery (fig. 9). Presently the monks also move portable wooden versions around to light vesper readings in the center of the nave (fig. 11).

Artificial light did more than make vigils possible; in an ecclesiastical context, light was a part of the celebration and manifestation of the divine. The notion that "God is light" (1 JOHN 1:5) appears several times in the Christian scriptures. John's Gospel opens with the praise of the Word, but also the Light and the life that "was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (JOHN 1:4–5). A few chapters later Jesus proclaims, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (JOHN 8:12). A similar message follows: "I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (JOHN 12:46).[39]

The symbolism and actuality of light became an integral part of liturgical services in the first centuries of Christianity. In the Nicene Creed, for example, Christians affirm that Jesus is "God from God, light from light . . . of one being with the father." The well-known Hymn of Light, already traditional in the late fourth century according to Saint Basil, was addressed to "O Joyful Light." Sung ever since in the vespers of the Byzantine and other rites, the hymn ritually transforms both the natural light at the end of the day and the artificial light kindled in the church into the "light of the world," Jesus Christ.[40] For that reason, Symeon of Thessaloniki could write in the fifteenth century that in church "divine illumination is bestowed by lighting the lamps."[41]

The light in the medieval church was constantly changing. We take artificial lighting for granted, but stable and safe nocturnal illumination is only a little over a century old.[42] Before gas and electric lights, people perceived and managed night in ways difficult for us to imagine.[43] Candles and lamps had to be continually tended and replenished. Managing lighting became a part of the dramaturgy of the liturgy and anticipated the variable lighting of modern theater. The illumination of a church varied within the service and across the church calendar. For example, according to the same Symeon, while the lection from Genesis is read from the pulpit at vespers,

> two portable candlesticks—or more if a bishop is present—and the censer are prepared in the sanctuary. . . . When the Genesis reading is finished, the deacon or priest appears immediately with the lights, the Royal Doors [the central doors of the chancel barrier] being open and all standing. In the middle of the church he makes the sign of the cross with the censer intoning: "Wisdom arise!

Figure 32 (above left) Father John Alipheris lighting candles. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 33 (above right) Church fully lit with candles and lamps for Easter. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

> The light of Christ shines upon all." . . . Then the lector on the Ambon reads the lection from Proverbs, and the usual lights in the church are lit. This signifies that at the end of the age the true light, Jesus Christ in flesh, has shone upon us who sit in darkness and filled the world with the grace of his light. This is why at the end of Vespers we say: "For thou art our illumination, O Christ our God."[44]

In large, well-endowed churches, artificial lighting was important to patrons and beholders, hence its mention in medieval sources. The effects could be dazzling. Justinian's Great Church in Constantinople was said to be filled with a "nocturnal sun" during the evening services.[45] At the vigil for the feast of the Ascension at a church in Jerusalem, according to a seventh-century source, the polycandela provided "a terrible and wondrous gleaming" that poured out of the windows and made the church seem to be on fire.[46] The charter of the imperial Pantocrator monastery in twelfth-century Constantinople discussed the lighting of its main church in some detail.[47] Ever-burning candles were placed before images in the main apse of the Pantocrator, the Crucifixion, and the Anastasis (Descent into Hades), and before the Washing of the Feet and the Last Supper in side chapels. During services lamps and candles on their tall stands were lit in other parts of the church, but the focus remained on the altar area, creating a hierarchy of image and place. The areas where the liturgy was celebrated and God was made manifest were the best lit, confirming the association of light and the divine.

The direct experience of attending solemn vigils at great churches in the Middle Ages is not available to us, but the monks of Saint Catherine's monastery do continue tradition, and the spatial context of their liturgies is the Justinianic church. While rituals have changed since the Middle Ages, their present performance can give some sense of the past known only through texts and works of art. Before vespers began in Holy Week 2005, Father John Alipheris, the monk in charge of the lights, busied himself lighting the larger chandeliers (fig. 32). During the service, he continued to light and extinguish candles in various parts of the

church, according to local customs similar to the staging described by Symeon of Thessaloniki. All the lamps and candles are lit for the great feast days of the year (fig. 33), but even a few candles create warm, embracing light and a comforting bulwark against the deep darkness of outlying spaces and the high ceiling overhead. At Easter, the processions of priests and deacons created a movable feast of light (see fig. 35), so different from the cold, hard, uniform illumination of modern fluorescent fixtures. In the long exposures of the camera, candle flames flicker and become balls of yellow, and the tapers carried in procession by priests and deacons turn into long streaks across the photograph.

Icons are made for and by this light. In the flickering light of candles, they sparkle and come alive, reflecting the light before them, much like the burnished back plate of a silver wall sconce. The transformed light, mingled with the images of saints or religious scenes, affected the medieval beholder. According to Symeon of Thessaloniki, "by seeing the saints and their beauty and through the light of the divine lights [lamps and tapers] our sight becomes bright and holy and we shine within."[48]

At the monastery, the effects of light and darkness may be observed in the right aisle of the church, where three icons of the Deesis group—Mary, Christ, and John the Baptist—are customarily displayed. In a photograph made in the morning (fig. 34), two icons (cat. nos. 24–25) have been removed for study. The supplications of John the Baptist on the remaining icon accompany the prayers of the monk standing below. During the day, much in the church

Figure 34 (right)
Monk at morning prayer beside icon of John the Baptist. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 35 (following pages)
Easter procession from the bema. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

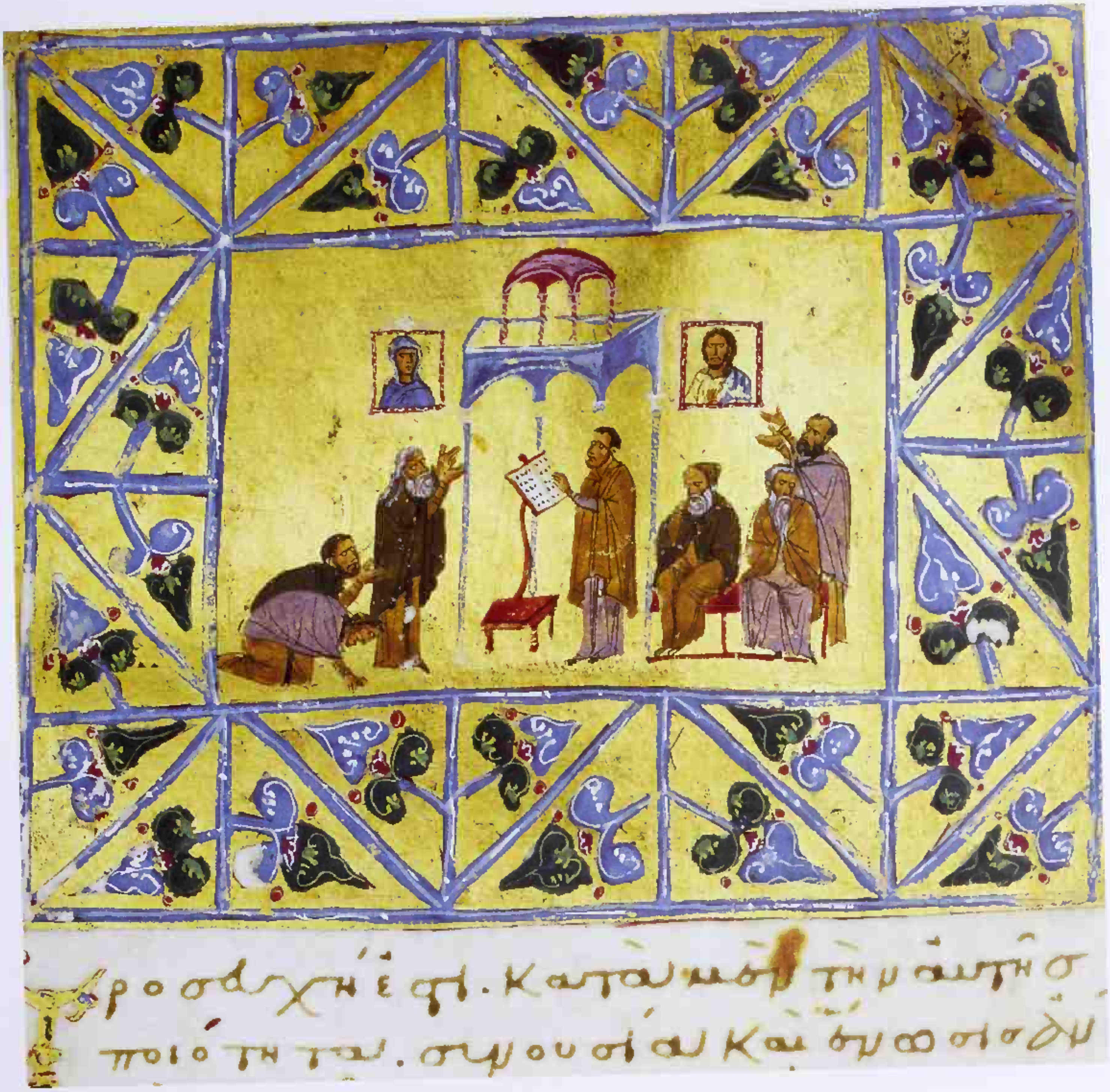


Figure 36 (opposite)
Monks praying at Christmas vigil beneath the three icons of the Deesis group. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

Figure 37 (above)
Miniature with monks praying and reading before templon and ciborium. In *The Heavenly Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, twelfth century. Sinai cod. 418 (cat. no. 33), fol. 269r.

Figure 38
Close-up of Menologion icon for November, by candlelight. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

attracts the viewer's eye, but at night (fig. 36) the dark obscures all not graced by lamp or candle. The monks and their dark garments fade into the night, and the three icons become the center of attention in this corner of the church. Their gold grounds catch the lamp light, and for a moment figure and ground reverse (see fig. 38).

In the nocturnal light of church vigils, the gold of icons does not so much flatten as enliven. Theologically, icons are the representations of holy persons that are absent; the icons are not holy themselves and thus are not idols. But in the nocturnal light, gold-ground icons make the holy powerfully manifest. Their dazzling radiance closes off the panel and returns the light and image of the saint to the viewer with renewed intensity. In the Renaissance and later periods in western European art, persons portrayed were placed in a room or before a landscape (cat. no. 61), and by implication, such images must have been made to be seen in adequately lit spaces during the day. To that aesthetic, a gold ground appeared primitive and without function. Modern artists and critics appreciated the gold ground as an apparent precedent for flat abstract paintings of the twentieth century, but they too misread the panels and applied to these past objects their present conditions of viewing, the abundant natural—and later artificial—light that the modern museum brings to the artwork.

What gave icons their power and efficacy in spaces of devotion was a set of beliefs and assumptions, a theology of the icon, that the Eastern Church hammered out after much discussion and no little turmoil during a period of Iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries. In its aftermath, it was agreed that Saint Basil had long before properly defined the nature of icon veneration: "The honor [shown] to a holy image is conveyed to its prototype" or what it represents.[49]

An epigram from the *Greek Anthology* about an image of Saint Michael explains how this worked in practice:

> The mortal man who beholds the image directs his mind to a higher contemplation. His veneration is no longer distracted: engraving within himself the [archangel's] traits, he trembles as if he were in the latter's presence. The eyes encourage deep thoughts and art is able by means of colors to ferry over [to its object] the prayer of the mind.[50]

A second basic doctrine of icon veneration in the Middle Ages was prescribed by the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which reinstated religious images in 787:

> The making of icons is not the invention of painters, but [expresses] the approved legislation of the Catholic Church. . . . The conception and the tradition are therefore theirs and not of the painter; for the painter's domain is limited to his art, whereas the disposition manifestly pertains to the Holy Fathers.[51]

In practice this meant that the subject matter of an icon verged on dogma, but its execution was left to trained artists. Byzantine icons may thus appear conventional and traditional, even when innovative and original, but all strive on their own terms for aesthetic beauty and visual power. Icon veneration was predicated on a long-standing understanding in the Greek East that the visible and earthly could lead to the invisible and the heavenly. Lacking the distrust of the natural world of other cultures, the faithful prayed with eyes open before icons (fig. 37), not with heads bowed and eyes closed, as depicted and practiced later in western Europe and North America, where vision itself has been denigrated in some quarters.[52]

EXHIBITION

The foregoing has suggested the physical context of past and present icon devotion at the monastery. Our exhibition of icons from that distant community explores the interrelated themes of holy image, holy space, and holy site—in three parts. The first part focuses on the nature of icons, led by the majestic sixth-century icon of Saint Peter. Displayed also are two other early encaustic icons removed from Saint Catherine's in the nineteenth century (presently in the collection of the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts in Kiev). This unprecedented display brings together three of the five earliest icons in existence (cat. nos. 1–3) and has occasioned the essay herein by Thomas Mathews about the ancient origins of such panels. Early icons are found at the monastery because the Sinai was no longer part of the Byzantine Empire after the Islamic conquests of the seventh century; hence it was not subject to the imperial-sponsored Iconoclasm that destroyed much of early Byzantine religious art. Thus also survive an icon of the Ascension, painted for Saint Catherine's in a local variant of a Syro-Palestinian style (cat. no. 5); and one of the earliest depictions of Christ dead on the cross (cat. no. 4), the subject that eventually led to the crucifixes of the late Middle Ages and the present day.

After Iconoclasm, icons quickly regained their former social prestige and religious power, as shown by wings of a triptych mounted together (cat. no. 6). The missing center was the Mandylion, the miraculous image of Christ not made by human hands and a much prized icon and relic of tenth-century Constantinople. The stunning images of holy figures in the Codex Theodosianus (cat. no. 7), illuminated a few decades later, remind us that an icon was not only a wood panel, its general meaning today, but any picture in devotional use, from an apse

mosaic (fig. 15) to the medallions on a candelabrum (cat. no. 39). Father Justin, an American monk long resident at Saint Catherine's, provides a unique perspective in his essay, herein, on the luxurious Codex Theodosianus.

Icons of the Virgin and Child were particularly celebrated in Byzantium and followed well-established models (cat. nos. 8–9). Thus, the large mosaic icon of the Virgin Hodegetria ("pointing the way") and the smaller panel with embossed background both copy a venerable icon in Constantinople. The media chosen and the small variations in the pose of mother and child belong to what the Seventh Ecumenical Council termed "the painter's domain" and reveal local style and content. The painters, for example, expressed differing notions about the Mother of God through subtle distinctions in the psychological interaction of the Virgin and Child.

Every icon was enveloped in language, words written on its field or frame and words spoken in its presence. Inscriptions, often prominent, identified holy figures even if an image of Mary with her infant, for example, could scarcely be mistaken for that of a less exalted female saint. Pious beholders prayed to icons and believed that they or, more properly, their prototypes answered back. Icons record the pleas of Stephen, the painter or patron of the two large icons of Elijah and Moses (cat. nos. 28, 29), and a hymn to the Virgin, written on the frame of the icon of the Patriarch of Jerusalem (cat. no. 53).

Texts on icons link the saints depicted with their beholders. For example, John the Baptist on a unique icon gestures to Christ above and displays a scroll with the standard inscription addressed to the viewer, "Behold the Lamb of God . . ." (cat. no. 10). The text inscribed between the saint and Jesus speaks for the Baptist's severed head below. It addresses Jesus and asks that he grant salvation to the living—that is, the pious and literate patron and beholder, who prays to John for intercessions by means of this icon.

In the nave of a church, changing displays of icons presented the principal events in the life of the church. Icons of these great feasts are well represented in this exhibition—from an icon of the Annunciation, a late-twelfth-century masterpiece (cat. no. 13), through the Nativity (cat. no. 14) and Crucifixion (cat. no. 15). A large polyptych of the traditional twelve feasts plus events of Holy Week provided a monastic chapel with the basic icons for the church year (cat. no. 18). Particular combinations for special occasions were also possible. Thus a diptych joins the Virgin Hodegetria to the Descent from the Cross, most likely for display on Good Friday (cat. no. 19).

Icons define and create holy space, the second theme of this exhibition and the focus of the objects on or near the reconstructed templon. The liturgical objects on the altar provide some sense of the rich church treasure that the monastery must have enjoyed from its Justinianic foundation. None of its medieval church silver survives, so it is fortunate that the Byzantine Collection of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., has loaned three of its greatest treasures, a sixth-century chalice, a paten, and a liturgical fan, or rhipidion (cat. nos. 36–38). They are joined by a bronze cross that is monetarily, but not aesthetically, less valuable. Its chief glory is the delicately incised vignettes of Moses on the cross arms and two hands of God emerging from a starry heaven (cat. no. 35) at the top. Nearby hangs something else used in this area, a priest's stole from the late Middle Ages (cat. no. 41). Its feast scenes define the principal occasions in which this elaborate embroidery would have been worn and seen. Also displayed in this section are narrow icons of the Saints Basil and John Chrysostom, authors of the two principal liturgies. These panels may have decorated the apse of the main church or one of its chapels and offered models of learning and devotion for the celebrants of the liturgy (cat. nos. 26–27).

Dominating this portion of *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground* is the reconstructed chancel barrier, or templon, that separates the bema reserved for the clergy from the nave of the laity. From the tenth and eleventh centuries on, the templon became a setting for more and more icons. First, feast scenes were added to the narrow entablature, as seen in the monastery's earliest and largest templon beam, from the twelfth century (cat. no. 20). The smaller beam with scenes of the life of Saint Eustratios was presumably designed for a chapel dedicated to that saint (cat. no. 21). In later centuries, icons began to be inserted between the columns that supported the entablature. Two icons, of Mary and of Jesus (cat. nos. 24, 25), are part of a group of three known as the Deesis, a frequent subject at the center of templon programs, as seen on the Eustratios beam. The John the Baptist panel of that Deesis group was not well enough preserved to exhibit, so the icons of the Virgin and Christ have been arranged according to the depiction of the chancel barrier and liturgy in a Sinai manuscript (fig. 37; cat. no. 33). The Deesis, combined with the four evangelists, also appears at the beginning of a Gospel lectionary meant to be read before the templon (cat. no. 34). Decorated chancel doors would have completed the ensemble, and two pairs are in this exhibiton, one depicting the Annunciation (cat. no. 22)—the most common subject for chancel doors—and the other depicting the expressive figures of Moses and Aaron (cat. no. 23), who are especially appropriate for the monastery.

Icons also appear elsewhere in the main church of Saint Catherine's. For some years, the monumental icons of Moses and Elijah (cat. nos. 29, 28), the prophets most closely associated with Mount Sinai, have hung on the side walls of the nave (fig. 12), as evoked in the exhibition, but a sixteenth-century source put them on the east wall of the porch, where they would have anticipated the imagery inside. Also part of the permanent church decoration of the church are the calendar icons that have been attached to columns in the nave since at least the fifteenth century (cat. no. 31). Presently the monks mark the passage of time by lighting a candle before the icon of the month (see fig. 38), thus venerating the saints of that month and sacralizing time as well as space in the nave.

The last section in this exhibition, "Holy Site," opens and closes with images of the hallowed grounds of the monastery—from a fascinating, if late and folkloric, view of the Sinai (cat. no. 43) to scenes of monastic life by the Cretan painter Georgios Klontzas (cat. no. 42) and El Greco's stunningly dramatic vision of the Sinai on a triptych from the Galleria Estense in Modena (cat. no. 61). A large icon of the saints Sergius and Bacchus (cat. no. 50) introduces the issues broached in this section. Dressed as crusading knights, the two saints suggest the presence of foreign pilgrims at the monastery, and the panel itself underscores the art-historical complexities of this material. What was only recently exhibited as the work of a Latin Crusader painter has lately been assigned to a Syrian artist. Another indication of the cosmopolitan and multilingual nature of the community of monks and pilgrims are two Arabic manuscripts, the earliest dated translation of the Gospels (cat. no. 32) and a copy of the *Heavenly Ladder* of Saint John Climacus (cat. no. 49). Many works of foreign derivation were likely gifts to the monastery, as is well documented for the large Gothic Saint Catherine (cat. no. 57), commissioned in 1387 by the Catalan consul in Damascus. In his essay herein, David Jacoby discusses pilgrimages to the monastery and the larger context of such gifts.

Several works in this last section illustrate and address monastic audiences. At the beginning of a copy of the sermons of Gregory Nazianzenus, itself a twelfth-century donation to a monastery near Constantinople (cat. no. 45), an elaborate monastic setting surrounds the author. Here Saint Gregory is dressed as a monk, not a bishop as customary. The same habit appears on Saint Macarius, shown with a cherub in an unusual icon that is an allegory of

monasticism (cat. no. 44). The bust portraits of Saint Theodosia—a fierce opponent of Iconoclasm—and the monastery's former abbot, Saint John Climacus, similarly represent models of the devout life (cat. nos. 46–47). Finally, the small, elegant icon of the Heavenly Ladder and its many demons would have reminded its monastic beholders of the literal pitfalls on the way to salvation.

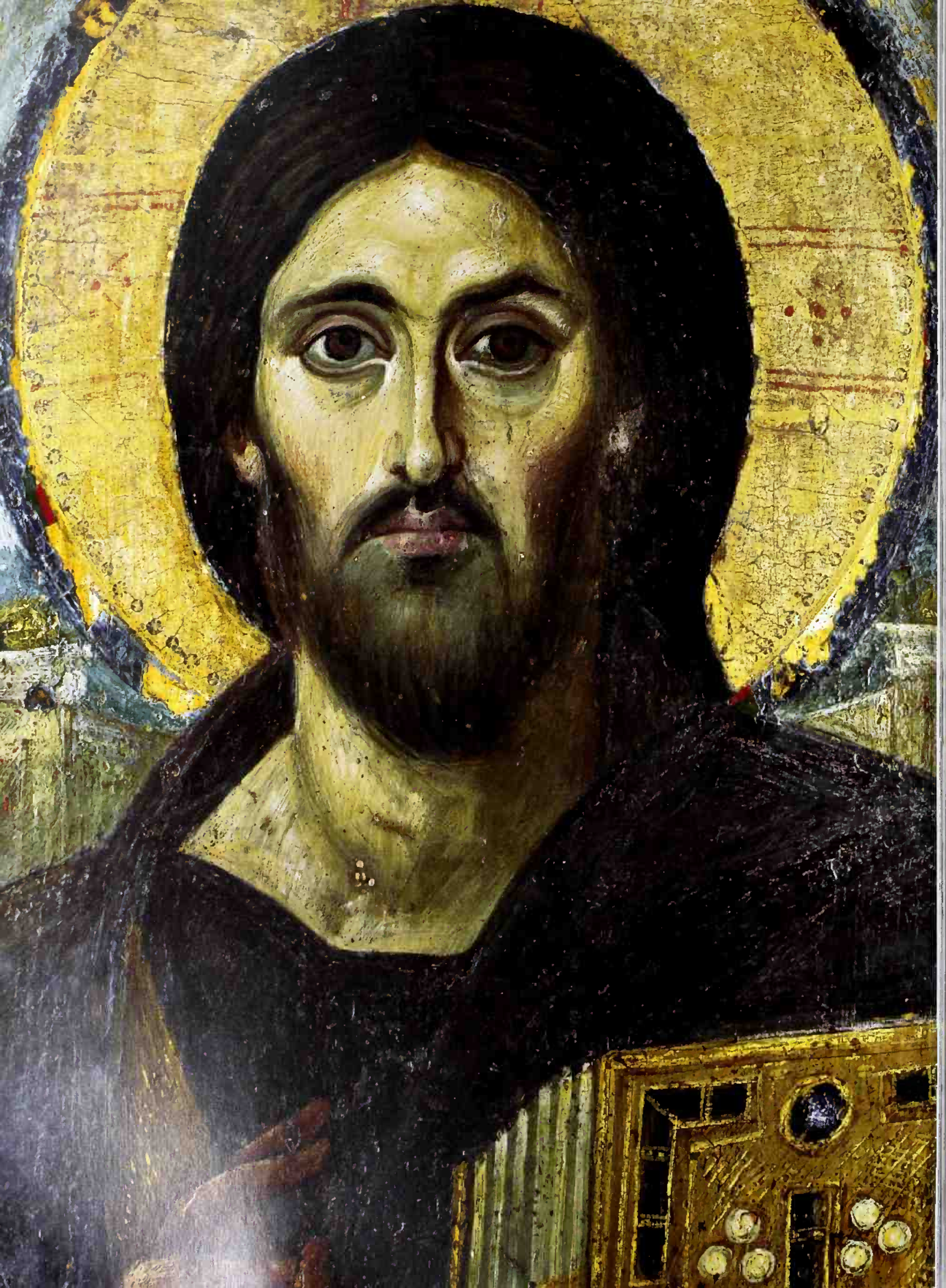
Other icons in this section document the patron saints of the monastery, the subject of Kristen M. Collins's essay herein. Dedicated initially to the Virgin, the monastery was naturally focused as well on Moses. The patriarch of Jerusalem, Euthymios II, prays to both in an icon executed after his death by the local painter Peter (cat. no. 53). Equally visionary is the small panel of Moses turning toward the Virgin and Child and addressing them (cat. no. 52), one of a number of panels with similar subject matter. Moses appears yet again in a larger icon, removing his sandal before a fiery bush. In the bottom left corner of the frame, a small turbaned figure kneels beneath Moses' bare right foot, much like the monk Pimen before Saint George (cat. no. 16).

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the cult of Saint Catherine intensified at the monastery. In the well-known icon with scenes of her life (cat. no. 55), Catherine appears dressed as a Byzantine empress in the manner of the portrait of the actual Empress Irene in an icon of local significance (cat. no. 54). That Byzantine iconographic tradition begins to weaken in an icon of Catherine and the Virgin of the Burning Bush (cat. no. 56) and disappears by the fourteenth-century date of an icon donated by the Catalan consul in Damascus (cat. no. 57). That cult of Catherine spread to the West, as shown by the large altarpiece from the J. Paul Getty Museum collection (cat. no. 60), but at the Sinai monastery she never supplanted the Virgin of the Burning Bush, so that scenes of both command the center of a sixteenth-century triptych (cat. no. 58), and the Virgin dominates a dramatic and intricate icon by the Cretan artist Michael Damaskenos (cat. no. 59).

Holy Image, Hallowed Ground concludes with El Greco's remarkable vision of God bestowing the Ten Commandments atop Mount Sinai (cat. no. 61). Now, the monastery and its hallowed ground become something visualized, not experienced. Unlike the painter of that humble but detailed topography from the eighteenth century (cat. no. 43), El Greco never saw the deserts of Sinai. For some critics, the change was salutary: "In the Modena triptych the painter begins to emancipate himself from the spaceless strait-jacket of the gold ground to a more atmospheric dark red and brown."[53] But that so-called straitjacket, the theology of the icon, and the orchestration of light and icons in physical spaces had once conveyed the presence rather than the representation of the divine. Something was lost as well as gained, therefore, when this great painter migrated to the West and firmly placed the Sinai in an increasingly secular landscape tradition that survives to the present in the photographs that begin this essay.

NOTES

1. On the climate and geology of the Sinai, see Dahari 2000, pp. 3–6. I am grateful to Jaś Elsner for his comments on this essay.
2. Wilkinson 1981, p. 91.
3. Wilkinson 1981, pp. 93–95. The stairs may be dated by the epigraphy of an inscription on the second of the two arches: I. Ševčenko 1966, pp. 257, 263.
4. Wilkinson 1981, p. 96.
5. See Thomas F. Mathews, "Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai," herein, and Forsyth 1968, p. 4
6. When this occurred is debated. Peter Grossman, the most recent archaeologist to study the church, suggests that the addition is from the late sixth or early seventh century: P. Grossman 1988, pp. 555–56.
7. These inscriptions of entry are published in I. Ševčenko 1966, p. 262, and discussed in Coleman and Elsner 1994, pp. 78–79
8. Rabino 1938, p. 20.
9. Some pilgrims would also have seen a mosaic, apparently placed over the narthex door that leads into the church. It represented the Virgin and Child flanked by Saint Catherine and Moses, according to the fourteenth-century traveler Niccolò da Poggibonsi. See Braun 1973, p. 292. Such iconography would most likely be no earlier than the flourishing of the Catherine cult at the monastery in the thirteenth century. On the latter see the essays of David Jacoby, "Christian Pilgrimage to Sinai until the Late Fifteenth Century," and Kristen M. Collins, "Visual Piety and Institutional Identity at Sinai," herein.
10. Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973, pls. 84–86.
11. Most of this upper ray presently consists of painted yellow cubes that restore losses in this area, but a small patch of original ray survives. Its irregular pattern of gold and silver cubes is identical to that of the other rays and thus originally was the same color. For allowing me to study the mosaic at close range, I am grateful to its restorers, Elena Macchia, Raffaele Lacra, and Poteto Maselli.
12. Malherbe and Ferguson 1978, p. 59; Elsner 1994, p. 90. On the mosaic, more recently, see Andreopoulos 2002.
13. Elsner 1994, p. 92.
14. Elsner 1994, pp. 97–98.
15. Alexander Kazhdan and Robert S. Nelson in *ODB*, s.v. "John Klimax."
16. Robert F. Taft in *ODB*, s.v. "Vigil."
17. Elsner 1994, p. 95.
18. Luibheid and Russell 1982, p. 194.
19. Luibheid and Russell 1982, p. 196.
20. Galavaris 1978b, pp. 74–75. Egyptian monks today understand the eggs to be symbols of the Resurrection.
21. Weitzmann in Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973, p. 14.
22. Malherbe and Ferguson 1978, p. 35.
23. Robert F. Taft in *ODB*, s.v. "Vespers."
24. Forsyth 1968, pp. 8–9.
25. C. Mango 1972, p. 12. I thank Charles McClendon for advice on this matter.
26. William Loerke in *ODB*, s.v. "Roof."
27. Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973, p. 8.
28. Reuterswärd 1982, p. 96.
29. Origen, quoted in Taft 1983, p. 17.
30. Illustrated in Brandenburg 2004, figs. 134–35.
31. On the church and its inscriptions see Barber 2002, pp. 61–66.
32. Dix 1945, pp. 24–25.
33. Davis 1989, p. 17. Generally on lighting vessels in early churches, see Dendy 1959, pp. 1–16.
34. Dendy 1959, p. 8.
35. Boyd 1988, pp. 197–98. I thank Jaś Elsner for this reference.
36. Boyd and M. M. Mango 1992, figs. S25.1–S35.1.
37. C. Mango 1972, p. 90; Isar 2004; L. E. Butler 1992, pp. 75–77. A useful general essay is Theis 2001.
38. Gonosová and Kondoleon 1994, pp. 258–59. Such stands appear to be extended versions of candle or lamp stands for tables, for which see silver versions in M. M. Mango 2003, pp. 64–67.
39. See Taft 1983, pp. 248–49.
40. Taft 1983, pp. 212–13.
41. Galavaris 1978b, p. 72; Symeon of Thessaloniki in *PG*, vol. 155, col. 344.
42. Schivelbusch 1988. I thank my colleague Edward Cooke for this reference.
43. For attitudes toward the night in the early modern period, which may have been little different from those in the Middle Ages, see Ekirch 2005. I thank Kristine Hess for this reference.
44. Simmons 1984, p. 93.
45. Paul the Silentiary: C. Mango 1972, p. 89.
46. Meehan 1983, p. 69, cited in Buckton 1994, p. 107.
47. Analyzed by Congdon 1996.
48. Galavaris 1978b, p. 72.
49. C. Mango 1972, p. 169 (Saint John Damascene, *De fide Orthodoxa* 4.16).
50. C. Mango 1972, p. 115 (*Anthol. graeca* 1.34).
51. C. Mango 1972, p. 172. The best recent art-historical account of Iconoclasm is Barber 2002.
52. Jay 1993.
53. Teuffel 1995, p. 170.



Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai

Thomas F. Mathews

The discovery of the icons at Saint Catherine's monastery was a major event for the history of art. The remoteness of the Sinai monastery had shielded its artistic treasures from the conflicts that despoiled other centers of the Christian East, and over the course of fifteen centuries the monastery had accumulated a collection of incomparable richness. It was particularly the icons of the early period that substantially altered our picture of the development of medieval art. When George and Maria Sotiriou, followed by Kurt Weitzmann, published these panel paintings in the 1950s, they lifted a veil on a phase of painting history that had been virtually unknown.[1] To the extent that Byzantine icons were the eventual source of European panel painting, this discovery had exceptional importance for the history of art.[2] At the same time, the powerful paintings themselves challenged our understanding of the underlying religious phenomena. How and when the cult of icons grew up had been discussed principally on the basis of historical and theological texts; with the Sinai discovery it became possible to argue directly from the physical evidence of a substantial body of icons. As new material, pagan as well as Christian, continues to be brought to light, the present exhibition offers a unique opportunity to review these issues.

Three important aspects of the icon phenomenon seem to emerge more sharply than previously. First, the study of early icons brings us face-to-face with the deep debt of Christian religion to its pagan antecedents. Though the clergy always sought to sharpen the lines that distinguished Christians from their pagan neighbors, both in belief and in behavior, it appears that the religious impulse behind icons, or the impulse to make votive offerings, remained substantially the same. The deep-rooted religious traditions of the Mediterranean world were shared across what we might call denominational boundaries, and in recent years scholarship has focused on pagan antecedents of icons, namely a body of religious panel paintings, chiefly from ancient Egypt, which in construction and composition compare well with the corpus of early Byzantine icons. Dating from the first to the third century, these panel paintings exhibit the ancient divinities in nonnarrative frontal poses, holding symbols of their power, their heads ringed with halos (figs. 40, 47).[3]

Second, the icons speak eloquently of the private piety of the early Christians. Christian worship is most often studied in its public, communal dimension, called the "liturgy." This is the worship that the Christian assembly conducts in the church under the direction of the clergy. The texts of these rites—Baptism, the Eucharist, Holy Orders, and the daily prayers of the Hours—were recorded from earliest times, and their history and theology have been

Figure 39 (opposite)
The Blessing Christ, first half of the sixth century (detail, fig. 50).

Figure 40 (below left) Military God, first to third century. Paint on panel. Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 41 (below right) Drawing of Enthroned Mother of God with Angels and Donor, sixth century(?). Fresco. Kom el-Dikka, House D, Alexandria, Egypt.

studied with meticulous scholarship.[4] But alongside this official worship, Christians also worshipped at home in a more spontaneous and unregulated fashion right from the start.

"When you pray," Christ urges his followers in Matthew's Gospel, "go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you," and in this context he gives his disciples the Lord's Prayer (MATT. 6:6).[5] In Egypt in the second quarter of the third century, Origen speaks of a kind of consecrated prayer corner at home. "Any place can be suitable for prayer: it becomes so as soon as someone prays well in it. . . . If we want to pray quietly without being disturbed, we may choose a particular place in our own house, if there is space—a consecrated place, so to speak—and pray there."[6]

This kind of private, lay prayer is less well documented than liturgical worship and has consequently been neglected in scholarship. Icons turn out to be among the most vivid documents of this aspect of Christian life. The furnishing of "consecrated places" at home with icons is attested in historical sources from the second century on and is documented in Egyptian archaeology in the sixth century, both in an elaborate house in Alexandria, known as Kom el-Dikka D, and in the living quarters of the monks at Bawit, Saqqara, and Kellia (fig. 41).[7] Icons are thus shown to be eminently personal objects, situated within the traditional conventions of votive offerings.

Third, private devotion provides a context for situating the extraordinary icons that the emperor Justinian commissioned at his founding of the monastery at Mount Sinai. Modern scholarship always views the piety of the emperor with a skeptical eye, but his religious motives

are no more suspect than those of any other Christian—or pagan, for that matter.[8] The modes of piety seem to transcend class and station. Alongside the functions of his official persona we must allow the emperor space for exercises of devotion, and this seems to be especially attested in a set of icons attributable personally to the emperor Justinian, which are the prize of the Sinai collection.

Serious reflection and even theological speculation accompanied all of these developments in the early Byzantine period, giving the subject a spiritual depth and an intellectual complexity not usually credited to this material.

THE CORPUS OF EARLY ICONS

In defining "early," Leo III's edict of 726 that banned the use of icons is generally accepted as the cut-off date.[9] The number of icons before that date is rather limited. Weitzmann counted some thirty-six Sinai panels in this category, including four from Saint Catherine's monastery that are now in Kiev, Ukraine.[10] Another thirty or so can be counted from the rest of Egypt, whether now still in Egypt or held in European collections;[11] and Rome has another four—all of the Mother of God.[12] In other words, the corpus of icons of the early Byzantine period is about seventy pieces, and Saint Catherine's monastery has the largest collection of these.

Some icons are called "Coptic," a term that should designate national Egyptian Christianity, which in the year 451 set out on a course in dogmatic and ecclesiastical opposition to the Byzantine Orthodoxy of Constantinople.[13] But the icon phenomenon transcends the ecclesiastical division, making the term somewhat irrelevant. The fact that icons provoked the bitter violence of Iconoclasm is abundant witness to the powerful place they held in Christian life.

An acute shortage of documentation makes the study of early icons especially difficult. We have no Pliny or Vasari to tell us stories of the painters and their patrons, and no archives survive on which to construct a history. Prior to the intensive discussions that followed the outbreak of Iconoclasm, sources mention icons only rarely and in passing. Only four or five of the surviving icons have inscriptions with clues about their origin. Indeed, the largest body of icon inscriptions, those collected in book 1 of the *Greek Anthology*, refer to icons that are now totally lost, "ghost" icons, so to speak.[14] Nevertheless, a careful sifting of the available evidence yields a more coherent story than might have been expected. Especially important is the cumulative evidence of the corpus of early icons, and in this regard the deposit of icons at Sinai contains critical information about the icon phenomenon as a whole. Logically these larger blocks of evidence should be considered first, after which our focus can be narrowed by degrees to look at single icons and special classes of icons.

The first surprise in the corpus of early icons is their maturity and diversity. Art historians hesitate to assign any icons a date earlier than the sixth century.[15] The Sinai monastery is the earliest surviving repository of icons. Justinian erected the monastery in 548–65. Earlier collections must have existed, as the sophistication of the surviving pieces demonstrates; they are in no way the first faltering steps of a new art genre. Indeed, in their complexity the early icons already anticipate most of the major developments of later icons. Figures are depicted in full-length, half-length, and bust-length form; the saints appear singly, in groups, in registers, or inserted in roundels. Hinged triptychs are common,[16] and examples occur of bilateral icons,[17] icons on book covers,[18] and icons fitted for templon epistyles (see fig. 52; discussed

Figure 42 (right). Construction details common to pagan and Christian icons. Drawing by Thomas F. Mathews.

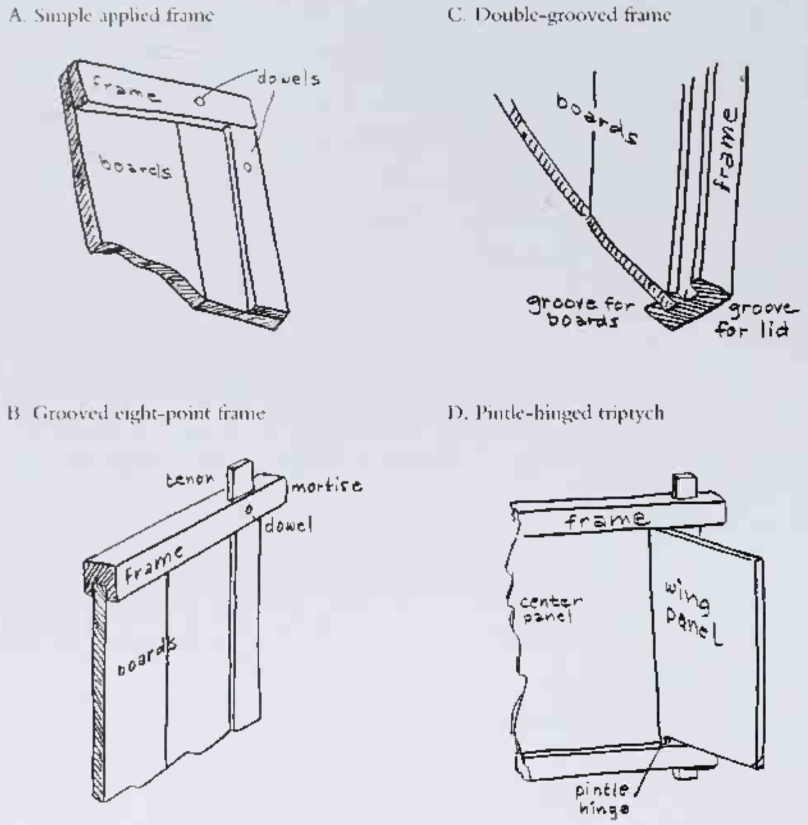


Figure 43 (below). Archangel, sixth century. Paint on panel. Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (1129b).

later under "From the Private to the Public Sphere"). All of these formats would enjoy wide popularity in middle Byzantine centuries.

Iconmakers built their panels with vertical boards hardly more than a centimeter (half-inch) thick; they fixed these in grooved frames that interlocked at the corners in mortise-and-tenon joints, or they applied frames directly to the face of the boards, fastening them with dowels (fig. 42). They constructed triptychs, which introduced possibilities of concealment and revelation; the wing panels were made to swivel on pintels inserted in ledges above and below the center panel. Although most of the icons range in size from 30 to 50 cm (1 to 1½ ft.), several approach 1 meter. The size of the icon of Santa Maria in Trastevere, at nearly 2 meters, is quite exceptional (fig. 49). It is significant that all of these features of construction are also well documented in the pre-Christian icons that have recently come to light.[19]

The narrative themes are few, but they represent both Old and New Testament events, and the nonnarrative subjects include a wide diversity of sacred figures—from Christ and his mother to angels, apostles, prophets, and saints—representing themes alternately remote and solemn, tender and reassuring, ascetic and severe. To convey this gamut of themes, the artists employed an impressive array of techniques, including flat washes of tempera, glowing layers of encaustic, and passages of brilliant gold, whether applied in leaf or painted in delicate graphic patterns.[20] Their execution

ranged from summary linear sketches to carefully constructed paintings of powerful presence—worthy of a Frans Hals (see fig. 43 and cat. no. 1).

Analyzing the icons from the point of view of style, commentators have found a wide diversity of effects as they try to distinguish Constantinopolitan from Palestinian from Egyptian paintings.[21] However strictly or loosely such "schools" can be established in the corpus, the obvious diversity witnesses a great many different constituencies involved in the "icon phenomenon." It is clear that the icon was not a new invention in the sixth century. Such painting had already developed and diversified over a wide geographical base as it emerged from and gradually distinguished itself from its pagan antecedents.

THE PHENOMENON OF VOTIVE OFFERINGS

The most fundamental problem posed by early icons is defining the genre or class of objects to which they belong. *Icon* is a modern art-historical term, introduced in the nineteenth century, designating a painting of a sacred subject on a wood panel intended for veneration, and it carries some cumbersome Christian baggage.[22] In early Byzantine times people referred to the paintings simply as *eikon*, the Greek word from which *icon* derives, but this is even less useful, for it means "image" in the widest sense, painted or sculpted, or even a mental or verbal representation. Much of the literature on the subject starts with the assumption that icons are a new category of art, an artistic innovation designed specifically for Christian cultic needs. But the earliest historical references to Christian icons imply the opposite. They all refer to the Christian icons as parallel to a well-established pagan religious use of painted panels, and they often describe a usage close to the pagan practice of votive offerings. This is a connection that has not yet been adequately examined.

The first account of a Christian icon is a lively story in the apocryphal Acts of John.[23] Pieter Lalleman has assigned it a date in the second quarter of the second century and has proposed a provenance from Smyrna in Asia Minor in the docetic ambiance in which the canonical Epistles of John were composed.[24] To summarize the narrative, the story tells that a certain Lycomedes, prefect of Ephesus, and his spouse, Cleopatra, fell victims of an evil eye and died, and John raised them from the dead. Lycomedes's spontaneous reaction was to have a painting made of Saint John, which he proceeded to venerate in his bedroom with candles, garlands, and incense. The parallel with pagan practice was recognized by the apostle himself in the story. "Is this one of your gods?" asked John. "You are still living like a pagan."

The document thus bears double witness, first to a Christian use of icons, and second to a similar, established pagan tradition of venerating savior gods with panel paintings. The Christian use, moreover, is not really condemned; John does not require the destruction of the icon. Instead he calls for a mirror to confirm the likeness of his portrait, validating the icon. Further, he allegorizes the icon by offering an anagogical interpretation, saying that Jesus is the true painter, who paints the souls of the faithful with colors, namely the virtues. Hence icons were already regarded as capable of carrying a Christian spiritual meaning.

The offering of an image in response to a cure—and resurrection from the dead is certainly the most dramatic of cures—is one form of votive response, and the Sinai collection as a whole can be seen as a compilation of votive offerings deposited individually for a variety of reasons. The radical disparity of the early Sinai collection is in itself significant evidence of this: among the early icons there are no matching sets or even matching pairs. The measurements are all different and the subjects seemingly random; for example, there is no sequence of the twelve apostles or feasts, as occurs later. What this means is that the icons were not commis-

sioned to fit into some architectural unit like an icon screen or to decorate a chapel with a certain program but were deposited at the monastery one at a time by different individuals. This is in perfect keeping with what is known in antiquity as the "phenomenon of votive offerings." This is the process by which the temples of the Graeco-Roman world accumulated their vast art treasures. War booty, athletic victory prizes, marble and bronze sculptures, paintings, and even humble terracotta figurines were left by the devout as part of a pious exchange with the gods, and they were left singly by different individuals.

The term *votive* can be used in a variety of ways, but strictly speaking it refers to a religious practice defined in a classic study by William Rouse.[25] This practice was constructed as an exchange between gods and humans, mediated by the votive offering. Rouse insists that the votive offering, properly speaking, was freely made, not a duty or an obligation of one's official position. The occasions for making these dedications were various, and Rouse describes eight or nine situations or moments in which a person might experience the gods' intervention and feel the need to respond, such as after a plentiful harvest, victory in war or in the Olympic Games, deliverance from sickness or calamity, election to civic office or receiving a civic honor. For instance, when Augustus on a military campaign narrowly escapes a bolt of lightning that kills his servant, he responds by the consecration of a temple dedicated to Jupiter Tonans, the thundering god, presumably containing a statue of Jupiter with the traditional thunderbolt in his raised right hand. The temple and its image thus become Augustus's way of responding to the god's address.

The votive response could take many forms. After a plentiful harvest one might offer a portion of the earth's bounty; after a victory one might offer the spoils of war. But in every situation the most natural offering, according to Rouse, was an image of the god.[26] Hence votive offerings were one of the major occasions for commissioning monuments, and the temples that were repositories for such offerings became veritable treasuries or museums. Inscriptions sometimes accompanied these dedications to specify the donor's intentions.[27] Typical expressions are "in thanksgiving," "for worship," "for god's favor," "for glory." In return for the offering the donor might ask for health, long life, or good fortune, or the giver could sum it all up in the general abbreviation "ep'agatho" (for the best), a formula very common in Egypt during the second and third centuries.

The traditional place for depositing such votives was the temple, but in late antiquity the situation changed dramatically. In the first place, state patronage of pagan temples declined dramatically in the third century, and domestic shrines played an ever larger role in religious observances.[28] At the same time, the reverse is observable in Christian worship, which in the first centuries was by force of circumstances centered in domestic shrines and only gradually emerged into public "temples." Christian icon worship, accordingly, began in the private, domestic sphere and only gradually made its way into the great churches that began to appear in the fourth century. The Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem became over time a rich repository of votive offerings of great diversity.[29]

In the votive situation, the work of art stood at the center of the dialogue between the gods and human beings: it was at the same time a response to a grace received and a petition for future favors. Many Christian icons can be construed as part of this religious tradition. Two types of historic sources can be invoked on this point: the literary narratives about icons in historical accounts and inscriptions placed on the icons themselves. Both of these sources offer precious evidence.

Writing in the 320s, church historian Eusebius of Caesarea says that he himself has seen in Caesarea Philippi a bronze statue identified as an image of Christ, reputedly offered by the woman whom Christ cured of a hemorrhage (MARK 5: 25–34). He immediately recognizes this offering as an old pagan practice, which reminds him of painted icons he has also encountered. He comments, "It is not at all surprising that Gentiles who long ago received such benefits from our Savior should have expressed their gratitude thus, for the features of his apostles Peter and Paul, and indeed Christ himself, have been preserved in colored portraits which I have examined. How could it be otherwise, when the Gentiles habitually followed their own Gentile custom of honoring them as saviors in this uninhibited way?"[30] The word the author uses for saviors, *sotires*, designates gods who have intervened in human affairs, to whom the votive offering of the icon was therefore a response.

Examples of icons made in response to divine deliverance by cures are fairly numerous. Two such instances are described in *The Life of Saint Symeon the Younger*, written by a contemporary of the saint shortly after his death in 594. According to this account, when the saint cured one woman who had suffered from sterility, she immediately placed an icon of the saint in her home, where other women venerated it and received further miraculous favors.[31] Similarly, when the saint cured a man suffering from a restriction of the lungs, he responded by placing an image of the saint above the door of his shop.[32] In both cases, as in the stories in Eusebius and in the Acts of John, the icons were made during the saint or *sotir*'s lifetime; icons are not mortuary portraits, as has sometimes been suggested.

Dedicatory inscriptions demonstrate that Christian votive offerings continued to respond to much the same spectrum of situations as had pagan votives. For example, Sphoracius, who was consul in 452, was saved from fire by the miraculous intervention of Saint Theodore, for whom he later dedicated a church next to his Constantinople palace.[33] A victory in war also remained an occasion to offer holy images, particularly on the part of emperors.[34] Even the reception of civic honors continued to prompt the commission of images, according to dedicatory epigrams written by Agathias. For example, a certain Theodore, when he received the proconsular throne, had an icon made of Saint Michael; another icon of this saint was made by four novice lawyers on completing their studies.[35] Why the archangel Michael was appropriate we do not know; perhaps he was thought to regulate civic affairs.

At the same time, dedicatory inscriptions on icons document certain changes in Christian votive use. New occasions for making dedications emerge. Repentance, conversion, pilgrimage, or reception into the monastic state or holy orders could all occasion the offering of an icon. On the frame of a Sinai icon of Christ the Ancient of Days, the dedicant, a man named Philochristos, addresses his savior directly with a petition "for the salvation and pardon of the sins of your servant" (fig. 44).[36] The fact that he deposited the icon at Sinai makes it likely that it marked not just Philochristos's repentance in general but his assumption of the monk's habit; his name, which means "Lover of Christ," is typical of the new names assumed with entry into the monastic state.[37] The direct address of his inscription to the Savior also signals a change in attitude; while pagan votive inscriptions are always in the indicative with quasi-legal overtones, Christian inscriptions are often addressed personally to God or to the saints within the icon with requests formulated in the imperative mode. They have thus become prayers. Other Christian epigrams are addressed instead to viewers of the icon, offering directions for how to approach the icon, documenting a process by which icons became objects of direct veneration (discussed in detail later).

THE DIVINE CHILD AND HIS MOTHER

In the context of Christian votive offerings one would naturally expect that Christ, the Divine Benefactor and Savior par excellence, would far outnumber other icon subjects. But Mary far outnumbers Christ in the early period, and the same is true over the long history of icons. This seeming imbalance is righted, however, if along with images of Christ by himself one adds images of Christ in his mother's embrace. Christ then appears as easily the most popular of icon subjects, as is fitting, but the preferred way of venerating Christ turns out to be as an infant on his mother's lap (fig. 45).[38] This surprising fact has somehow escaped notice, because classification of iconography treats images of Christ by himself (e.g., Christ Pantocrator, Emmanuel, or Ancient of Days) and reduces the Child to an attribute of the Mother of God.[39] But the child is more important than the mother, and this was not forgotten. While the Gospels often mention worship of the adult Christ (only the magi worship the Child), Christians of the early centuries preferred to focus on the mystery of the Incarnation. The irreconcilable appearance of God in human flesh lay beyond explanation but not beyond imaging, for it was aptly conveyed by the Child on his mother's lap. The Sinai collection includes some of the most striking early examples of this theme.

Figure 44 (opposite)
Christ as the Ancient of Days, beginning of the seventh century. Tempera on panel, 76 × 53.5 × 2.3 cm (29⅞ × 21$^{1}/_{16}$ × ⅞ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Figure 45 (below)
Mother of God, sixth century. Encaustic on panel, 34.5 × 20.6 × 0.7–0.8 cm (13⅝ × 8⅛ × ¼–⅜ in.). Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts, Kiev, Ukraine.

If one were to seek pagan antecedents for the veneration of a child god with his mother, Egypt is the most likely territory. In the classical world Dionysos and Herakles were worshipped in childhood manifestations but not in conjunction with maternal figures. In Egypt, however, the divine child Horus, or Harpocrates in his Hellenistic name, was intensely venerated and consistently associated with his divine mother, Isis. It is significant that it was in Egypt that Mary received the title "Theotokos" (God-bearer), a title that had belonged to Isis. Popularized by Origen, the term served as a shorthand expression of the mystery of the Incarnation.[40] This language was vindicated by Cyril of Alexandria at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and made into the foundation of the dogma of the two natures in Christ as defined at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.[41]

In origin Horus was a god of the sky and patron of divine kingship, but in Hellenistic times he was especially venerated as a potent healer and as protector of children and family.[42] On the one hand, with youthful sidelocks and a childish finger-to-mouth gesture, his image appeared in sculpture, icons, and most commonly terracotta figurines frequently discovered in domestic shrines. On the other hand, his mother, Isis, "whose names cannot be numbered," was the most widely venerated goddess of the entire Hellenistic world and appeared in numerous guises alone and in connection with her child.[43] Scholarly attention to her role as nursing mother, "Isis lactans," has obscured the diversity of her motherly iconography.[44] In compositions with her child she sometimes nurses, sometimes offers her breast covered or bare, sometimes simply presents her child, in compositions that anticipate the variety of Mary's poses with her child. Hodegetria, the commonest type of Marian iconography, which is usually interpreted as Mary pointing to her child, can as well be interpreted in Isiac fashion as Mary offering her breast to her child.[45]

The Sinai painting of the enthroned Mother of God (fig. 46) presents suggestive reminiscences of Isis.[46] First of all, Mary sits on a gilded throne, magenta cushioned and ornamented with pearls and jewels, with a matching footstool. Such a throne is hardly the furniture of Mary of Nazareth, but

Figure 46 (opposite)
Enthroned Mother of God with Angels and Saints, sixth century. Tempera on panel, 68.5 × 49.7 × 1.5 cm (27 × 19⅝ × ⅝ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

it is a proper attribute of Isis. Isis's name seems to have meant throne, her hieroglyph was a throne, and she was protector of the pharaoh's throne. Mary's acquisition of this royal furniture can be read as evidence that she was every bit the equal of the ancient divine mother whom she had replaced.

This kind of competition of the Christian pantheon with its pagan antecedents is observed frequently in the formation of Christian iconography. The depiction of Mary's face even resembles that of Isis's (figs. 47, 48). While the military guards who flank Mary stare boldly at us, she refuses eye contact and looks slightly to our right, which has caused some puzzlement among art historians. But Isis too has a look that is remote and serene, above human problems. Like Isis, Mary has none of the portrait specificity of Egyptian mummy faces. For example, the friendly twinkle of reflected light, which is observed in Fayyum mummy portraits, is missing in her eyes. Her features are generalized to make her appear "divine." Indeed, this detached "Isis look" is characteristic of most early images of the Virgin.[47]

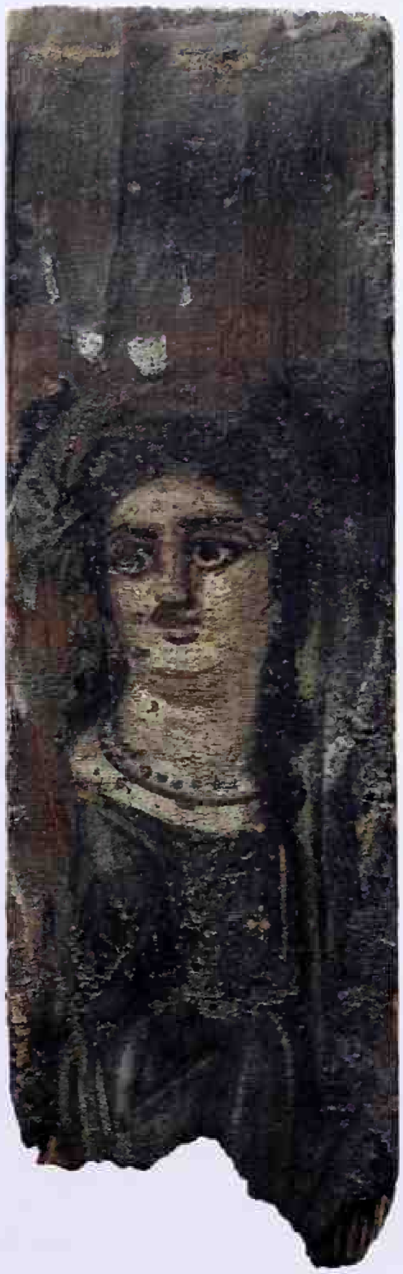


Figure 47 (left)
Isis(?), Imperial Roman. Encaustic on wood, 24.5 × 7.6 cm (9⅝ × 3⅛ in.). Aegyptisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, (Inv. 14443).

Figure 48 (right)
Isis, left wing of a triptych, AD 180–200. Tempera on wood, 40 × 19.1 × 1.27 cm (15¾ × 7½ × ½ in.). The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (74.AP.22).

Figure 49
Enthroned Mother of God with Angels and Donor, sixth century. Tempera on panel, 164 × 116 cm (64⅝ × 45¾ in.). Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome.

On either side of Mary in the same painting, angels turn their heads sharply at the interruption of the divine hand from above. These angels are key to the composition, which enjoyed wide popularity in pre-Iconoclast times. They are more than just attendants. Because of their ability to see what is happening in both worlds, angels are thought to understand the unfathomable mystery of the Incarnation better than mere mortals. Two surviving inscriptions guide us in interpreting their presence. In the huge icon at Santa Maria in Trastevere, attributed now to the sixth century, angels flank the enthroned Mother of God, each raising a hand in surprise at the mystery before them (fig. 49).[48] The inscription in the frame, incomplete though it is, refers to the angels, implicitly inviting the viewer's response: "The chiefs of the angels stand astonished at the birth of the child, for God himself has become (man)."[49] The angels' experience is cast in traditional language of the religious awe, or "fear and trembling," at the divine presence. The dedicant of the icon, Pope John III (r. 561–74) or his successor Benedict I (r. 575–79), enters the icon in reduced scale in the right foreground.

A second inscription has survived in the *Greek Anthology*, presenting another image of the Mother of God with angels: "My Queen, you hold in your arms your Child, God's all-embracing Son, at whom the angels shiver in awe. Make him gentle in heart toward mankind, and thus preserve from calamity the whole world."[50] The icon this inscription once enframed is now lost, but the text would perfectly suit the Sinai icon of this subject (see fig. 46), which has lost its frame. The prayer seeks Mary's intercession with her son, who holds the safety of the world in his arms. If the Sinai icon were Justinian's votive offering on the occasion of the dedication of the monastery to the Mother of God, it might appropriately have carried such an inscription for the safety of the world, over which Justinian claimed universal earthly dominion.

JUSTINIAN AS DEDICANT

The possibility of proposing personal interpretations is hampered by the lack of inscriptional evidence. Inscriptions were commonly entered onto icons' frames, but most of the frames are now missing or badly damaged. Besides the panel of Philochristos mentioned earlier, offered perhaps on the occasion of his receiving the monastic habit, only one other early Sinai icon bears an inscription explicitly naming a dedicant, and this is the fragmentary icon of Leo being received by Saint Theodore, who was one of Mary's military guards in an early icon at Sinai.[51] According to the inscription, Leo is a high government official, a *dekanos*—that is, a trusted palace messenger. Leo wears a blue mantle with pearled borders and the red shoes of the court (like those of Mary), and his head is framed with the square nimbus of a living person. Because the icon is at Sinai one must suppose Leo's personal connection with the monastery, such as a visit, more likely on official business from the emperor rather than as a simple pilgrim.

That the emperor Justinian was personally involved in the monastery is asserted by Procopius, who tells us that Justinian "dedicated" the church he built to the Mother of God, using the language traditional to votive offerings.[52] The site of the Burning Bush, in the garden in front of the monastery, suggests the dedication to Mary as container of God's fiery presence.[53] That Justinian should also have offered the Enthroned Mother of God icon to celebrate this accomplishment would be most natural. The high quality of the encaustic painting, its generally accepted date in the mid-sixth century, and its "find spot" at the monastery all reinforce this supposition. The icon might be seen to make explicit Justinian's prayer on behalf of his whole empire.

On similar grounds three other icons can be argued to be Justinian's personal votive offerings: the Blessing Christ (see fig. 50), the Saint Peter (see cat. no. 1), and the Saints Sergius and Bacchus (see cat. no. 3). These, along with the Enthroned Mother and Child discussed earlier, form a fairly tight-knit group assigned to distinguished patronage in Constantinople in the middle of the sixth century. Since its cleaning in 1962, the Blessing Christ has become Sinai's best-known icon.[54] Its personal association with Justinian is argued most forcefully by Weitzmann, who points out its very close technical association with the Enthroned Mother and Child, down to very minor decorative details such as the tiny punched rosettes in the gold halo. The image type seems to have had a special importance for the emperor, as it was reused on a silver cross of Justin II (r. 565–78) and on the solidi of Justinian II (r. 685–95). Derived from the facial type of Zeus, the father god of Greece, it was circulated in Egypt on icons of Serapis and Soknebtynis (fig. 51). But the name "Pantocrator" commonly given to its Christian appearance is technically anachronistic; the term is first used in the ninth century, when it refers to the use of this image type in dome decoration.[55] The inscription of "Philanthropos"

(Lover of Mankind) above Christ's right shoulder is later, but it reflects well the benevolent intention of Christ's blessing gesture. Where the icon was placed when it came to Sinai is not known, but the heavy wear on the lower part of the panel shows that it was available for the devout to greet or kiss it.

The Saint Peter icon places the saint before a classical niche, like the Blessing Christ and the Enthroned Mother of God, and shares many of their stylistic traits.[56] It may also have a personal connection with Justinian that has not been mentioned before. While it is well known that "Justinian" is the name the emperor assumed when he was made coemperor with his still-reigning uncle, the emperor Justin, his original name, "Petrus Sabbatius," is seldom referred to.[57] Justinian dedicated the first church he built in Constantinople to his name saint and to Paul. Erected in his private quarters in the palace, it seems to have been intended as a votive offering in celebration of Constantinople's reconciliation with Rome in 518, in which Justinian played a prominent role. An icon for his name saint would also be perfectly natural. It is the largest of the early icons in the Sinai collection, a gift worthy of the emperor, distinguished, as Kitzinger says, "by the intense, if aristocratically restrained humanity of the saint's countenance and by the extraordinary refinement of its pictorial technique."[58] While the three keys in the saint's hand are commonly taken to refer to papal primacy, curiously enough, in the city of his primacy, namely Rome, Peter carries a scroll instead. In early Christian murals at Bawit, however, keys are an attribute of abbots, entrusted with the administration of their monasteries.[59] Perhaps Peter, as overseer of the universal church, was seen as a suitable model for Longinus, the abbot of Sinai, who is known to us by his robust portrait in the apse of the basilica.[60]

Alongside his church of Saints Peter and Paul, Justinian erected a second church, which, it has been proposed, was another personal votive offering, this time in celebration of the peace treaty he signed with the Persian Empire in 532.[61] This time the saints honored, Sergius and Bacchus, were military officers who had served in the Roman army on the eastern frontier, where they suffered martyrdom. Justinian restored the Syrian city named for Saint Sergius—that is, Sergiopolis; his dedication of a church to the pair in Constantinople signifies his choice of Sergius and Bacchus as patrons of his eastern border. One might hypothesize that he offered the icon of these two saints (cat. no. 3) as a similar votive at Sinai, to secure the southernmost point in his eastern border through their protection.

Figure 50
The Blessing Christ, first half of the sixth century. Encaustic on panel, 84 × 45.5 × 1.2 cm (33⅛ × 17⅞ × ½ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

Figure 51
Soknebtynis Enthroned and Min. Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, Egypt (22978).

FROM THE PRIVATE TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Icons offered as votives might have been kept in the treasury, called the *skeuophylakon*, where church vessels were kept, hung informally around the church, or placed in the privacy of the monks' cells. The decoration of monks' cells with mural icons was common in Bawit, Saqqara, and Kellis.[62] Their placement fulfilled the dedicant's need to respond to divine grace, and they constituted a permanent petition on that person's behalf. But once placed in the church they became vehicles for the prayers of whoever might see them, along with the candles, flowers, and incense that accompanied their cult. Thus they set up a certain competition with the veneration of the Sacrament on the altar. The first step toward integrating the icons into the eucharistic liturgy came with their formal installation on the epistyle of the chancel barrier. The enclosing of the Sacrament with icons invited the faithful to identify their veneration of the icons with their veneration of Christ, whom they believed to be present behind the barrier in the Eucharist. At this point icons became truly liturgical, inseparable from the official worship of the community; they ceased being simply objects of private devotion and became public media of prayer.

None of the icons considered to this point was made for framing in an epistyle or elsewhere on the chancel screen. Their frames speak of their character as individual, self-sufficient objects. But in the year 563, at his cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, Justinian installed a coherent set of silver-relief images of Christ, Mary and the angels, the prophets, and

Figure 52
Military Saint, relief icon from an epistyle in Bawit, Egypt, sixth/seventh century. Wood, carved, 30.2 × 12.7 × 1.3 cm (11⅞ × 5 × ½ in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1987.440.6).

the apostles on the epistyle of the sanctuary barrier.[63] A set of marble-relief panels with similar iconography was found in the ruins of the sixth-century church of Saint Polyeuktos in Constantinople, which may be from the epistyle of that church.[64] The earliest surviving wood icons designed expressly for epistyle use seem to be a pair of painted-relief icons from Bawit, which are now in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 52) and the Louvre.[65] In contrast to provisions for framing noted earlier, these panels have rabbets at top and bottom intended to fit into horizontal, grooved members. The panel in New York shows a military saint in an attitude of prayer, while that in Paris depicts the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary.

Meanwhile, icons attained a heightened spirituality or transparency as a medium of communicating with the divine, as witnessed by two inscriptions in the *Greek Anthology* from lost icons of archangels. Angels were a common subject on icons, as on the panel from Egypt, now in Paris (see fig. 43).[66] Both inscriptions attribute to the icons the power to conduct the soul into the realms of the invisible.

On the frame of one icon, Neilos Scholasticus wrote, "How bold, to make a figure of the incorporeal! The icon can even lead up to the spiritual contemplation of heavenly beings."[67] On the other, Agathias Scholasticus, the most distinguished hellenizing poet of Justinian's reign, speaks of the power of the icon both to make the angel present to the viewer and to transmit a person's prayers to the angel: "An invisible archangel, bodiless in the beauty of his shape, the courageous wax has dared to describe. How welcome! For in beholding the icon mortal man lifts his spirit to a mightier appearance, no longer distracted in veneration; engraving the image within himself he trembles at the presence. The eyes stir the depths of the soul, and by its colors art carries aloft the prayers of the mind."[68]

NOTES

1. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58; Weitzmann 1976.
2. Demus 1970, esp. chap. 6, pp. 205–41; Belting 1994.
3. Mathews 2001; Sörries 2003.
4. Dix 1945; Taft 1984; Schulz 1986.
5. The Lord's Prayer was in origin a prayer meant for private use in that it makes no reference to the liturgical action, and it was later introduced into the liturgy, as first attested in the early fourth century. Dix 1945, p. 94.
6. Origen, chap. 31, in *PG*, vol. 11, col. 552C.
7. Rodziewicz 1984; Zibawi 2003, pp. 72–95.
8. For a balanced assessment of how Justinian's behavior was viewed in his own time see Cameron 1985.
9. Anastos 1968.
10. Weitzmann 1976.
11. Langen 1990; Rassart-Debergh 1990; Rutschowscaya 1992. Each of these listings is incomplete.
12. Amato 1988.
13. On the problem of the category "Coptic" in art history, see T. K. Thomas 2000.
14. *The Greek Anthology*, book 1 (1960 ed., vol. 1).
15. Weitzmann regarded the John the Baptist icon as the earliest in the Sinai collection, which he dated to the turn of the fifth to sixth century; Weitzmann 1976, p. 35. The best candidates for an earlier date are the pair of panels used as book covers for the Freer Gospels, for which Sharpe's recent inspection has suggested a date contemporary with the manuscript they enclose, namely late fourth or early fifth century. Morey 1914, pp. 63–81; Sharpe 1996.
16. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 8–9, 36–38.
17. Although Weitzmann (1976, p. 10) was unaware of the existence of bilateral icons in the early period, there are in fact two from Egypt: Cairo Coptic Museum no. 9083, Saint Theodore Stratilates and Archangel Gabriel (Skalova 1999, pp. 379–80); and Athens, Benaki Museum, no. 8954, Saint Paul and an unidentified saint (unpublished).
18. See Freer Gospels (note 15).
19. Mathews 2001, pp. 171–73.
20. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 8–9.
21. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 5–8; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58; Lazarev 1967, pp. 92–94.
22. The term *icon* was given currency by the Russian art historians of the nineteenth century. See Tarasov 2002.
23. Bremmer 1995.
24. Lalleman 1998, pp. 252–53.
25. Rouse 1902. Somewhat different and narrower than Rouse's definition of *votive* is the use that equates *votive* with *ex-voto*, meaning something done or offered to fulfill a promise or a vow to do so. H. Leclercq in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, s.v. "Ex-voto."
26. Rouse 1902, p. 357.
27. Rouse 1902, pp. 322–34.
28. This process is described in some detail in Frankfurter 1998.
29. See Gary Vikan, Marlia Mundell Mango, and Annemarie Weyl Carr in *ODB*, s.v. "Votives."
30. Williamson 1966, p. 302.
31. Van den Ven 1962, chap. 118, pp. 96–98.
32. Van den Ven 1962, chap. 158, pp. 139–41.
33. *The Greek Anthology* 1.6 (1960 ed., vol. 1, p. 4).
34. *The Greek Anthology* 1.11 (1960 ed., vol. 1, p. 12).
35. *The Greek Anthology* 1.35–36 (1960 ed., vol. 1, p. 22).
36. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 41–42.
37. Other icons that may mark entrance into the monastic state include Sinai B39 St. Eirene, in which the donor Nikolaos [Sab?]atianos appears in the brown and black colors of a monk (Weitzmann 1976, pp. 66–67), and Sinai B51 Crucifixion, the inscription of which seems to allude to the monastic clothing (Weitzmann 1976, pp. 82–83; Corrigan 1995).
38. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 15–18.
39. For example, see iconography entries in *ODB*, esp. "Christ: Types of Christ" and "Virgin Mary: Types of the Virgin Mary" by Nancy P. Ševčenko.
40. McGuckin 2001.
41. Pelikan 1971, pp. 226–66.
42. Quirke 1992, pp. 61–67.
43. Witt 1997.
44. Tran 1973.
45. Mathews and Muller 2005, p. 9.
46. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 18–21; Robin Cormack in Athens 2000, p. 262.
47. On Mary's detached look see Robin Cormack's discussion of the apse mosaic of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, "her most frequently viewed representation in the Byzantine world," in Cormack 2000a, pp. 111–13.
48. Amato 1988, pp. 26–32.
49. Author's translation from Amato 1988, p. 26.
50. Author's translation from *The Greek Anthology* 1.31 (1960 ed., vol. 1, p. 20).
51. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 37–38; Kitzinger 1977, pp. 117–20.
52. Procopius, *Buildings* 5.8 (Dewing 1954–62, vol. 7, p. 356). Procopius uses the verb *anatith-emi*, which Rouse (1902, p. 323) remarks is "universal for the votive offering."
53. The location of the bush behind the apse is not attested before the twelfth century. In 384 Egeria found the bush in the garden that was (and still is) located in front of the church: "Ante ipsam autem ecclesiam hortus est gratis-simus habens aquam optiman abundantem; in quo horto ipse rubus est." Maraval 1982, p. 142.
54. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 13–15; Kitzinger 1977, pp. 120–22.
55. Matthews 1978.
56. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 23–26.
57. Martindale 1980, pp. 645–48.
58. Kitzinger 1977, p. 120.
59. Rutschowscaya 1998, pp. 30–31.
60. Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973, p. 13 and pl. 121.
61. Mathews 2005.
62. Zibawi 2003, pp. 72–93.
63. Paul the Silentiary, *Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae*, p. 682, translation in C. Mango 1972, p. 87.
64. Harrison 1986, pp. 156–57, pls. 197–206.
65. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. A1987.440.6, unpublished; Louvre no. E17118, Musée du Louvre, Rutschowscaya 1986, p. 107, no. 352. The two panels are the same height, 29 cm (11⅜ in.), share the same gamut of colors, particularly the slate blue background, and are similarly carved; e.g., in the faces or in the cuffs of the garments.
66. Cabinet des Médailles, 1129b. Compare Paris 1992, p. 144. The inscription on the frame remains undeciphered. Other early icons of angels include the bilateral icon in Cairo (see note 17) and the very worn Sinai B21 (Weitzmann 1976, p. 49). Weitzmann found the inscription illegible, but the angel's name, "Michael," can be made out at the top.
67. Author's translation from *The Greek Anthology* 1.33 (1960 ed., vol. 1, p. 20).
68. Author's translation from *The Greek Anthology* 1.34 (1960 ed., vol. 1, p. 20).

ΔΕΔΕΜΕ
ΝΟΝ ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ
ΟΥΡΑΝΟΙΣ +
ΚΑΙ Ο ΕΑΝ ΛΥ
ΣΗΣ ΕΠΙ ΤΗΣ
ΓΗΣ· ΕΣΤΑΙ·
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ΜΗ ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΩ·
ΕΙΣ ΤΑΣ Ϛ· ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΜΕΤΑ
ΜΟΡΦΩΣΙΝ
ΤΟΥ ΚΥ ΗΜΩΝ
· ΙΥ ΧΥ ·
· ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΟΡΘΡΟΝ·
ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΡΚΟΝ

ΤΩ ΚΑΙΡΩ Ε
ΚΕΙΝΩ· ΠΑ
ΡΑΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΙ
Ο ΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΠΕ
ΤΡΟΝ· ΚΑΙ
ΙΑΚΩΒΟΝ·
ΚΑΙ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ +
ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΦΕΡΕΙ

The Sinai Codex Theodosianus: Manuscript as Icon

Father Justin Sinaites

Saint Catherine's Monastery, or, to use the older and more formal title, the Sacred and Imperial Monastery of the God-Trodden Mount of Sinai—these names evoke images of "a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness" (DEUT. 32:10), a fortress of ancient stone walls, treasures locked in storerooms almost impossible to access, due to the remoteness of the site and the fact that it is a living monastery. In the past fifty years, it has become known that the monastery holds the most important collection of Byzantine icons in the world, preeminently those dating from the sixth century, painted in the encaustic technique, and a multitude of other icons dating from the time of the Comnenian emperors. The monastery library is no less remarkable. Even after the depredations of Uspenskii and Tischendorf, the library contains some 3,300 manuscripts written in eleven languages, the oldest dating from the fourth century. It is second only to the Vatican library in the number of Greek manuscripts. It is perhaps preeminent in the antiquity and importance of the Christian Arabic and early Slavic manuscripts, and in the number of intact Byzantine bindings. Over three hundred of the Sinai manuscripts are copies of the scriptures.

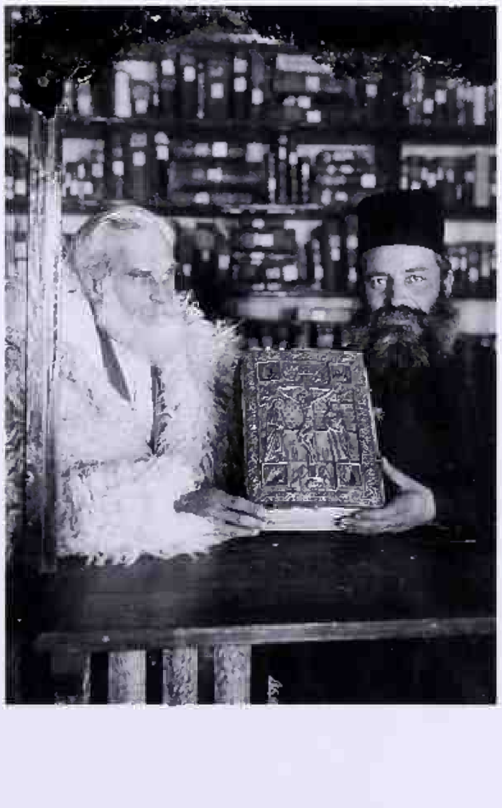


Figure 53 (opposite)
Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), p. 362.

Figure 54 (right)
The renowned biblical scholar Rendel Harris (at left) with the librarian of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, holding the Codex Theodosianus. Photo, 1923.

But it isn't as if all of these icons and manuscripts were discovered in abandoned caves. The manuscripts and icons were created for use in worship, study, and prayer, and they remain in this context, within the living community of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine—a community that traces its beginnings to the latter part of the third century and that has existed in unbroken continuity for over seventeen hundred years. The cycle of daily services, the ancient and distilled way of life, have been preserved by the community to this day. This gives an added significance to each icon and manuscript at Sinai. A lectionary written over one thousand years ago could be taken from the library and used in the services even now, for the language and the readings have remained the same. If we select one such volume and examine it carefully, perhaps we can learn something of the place of the

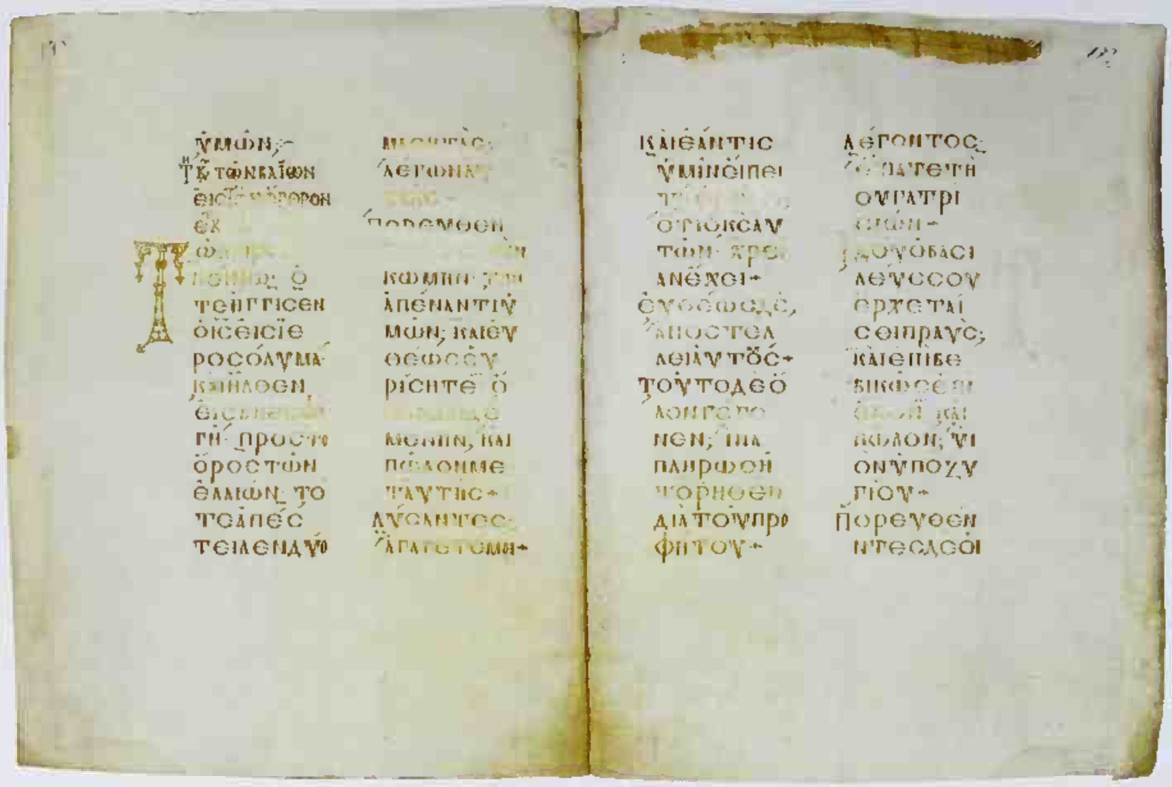


Figure 55
Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), pp. 178–79.

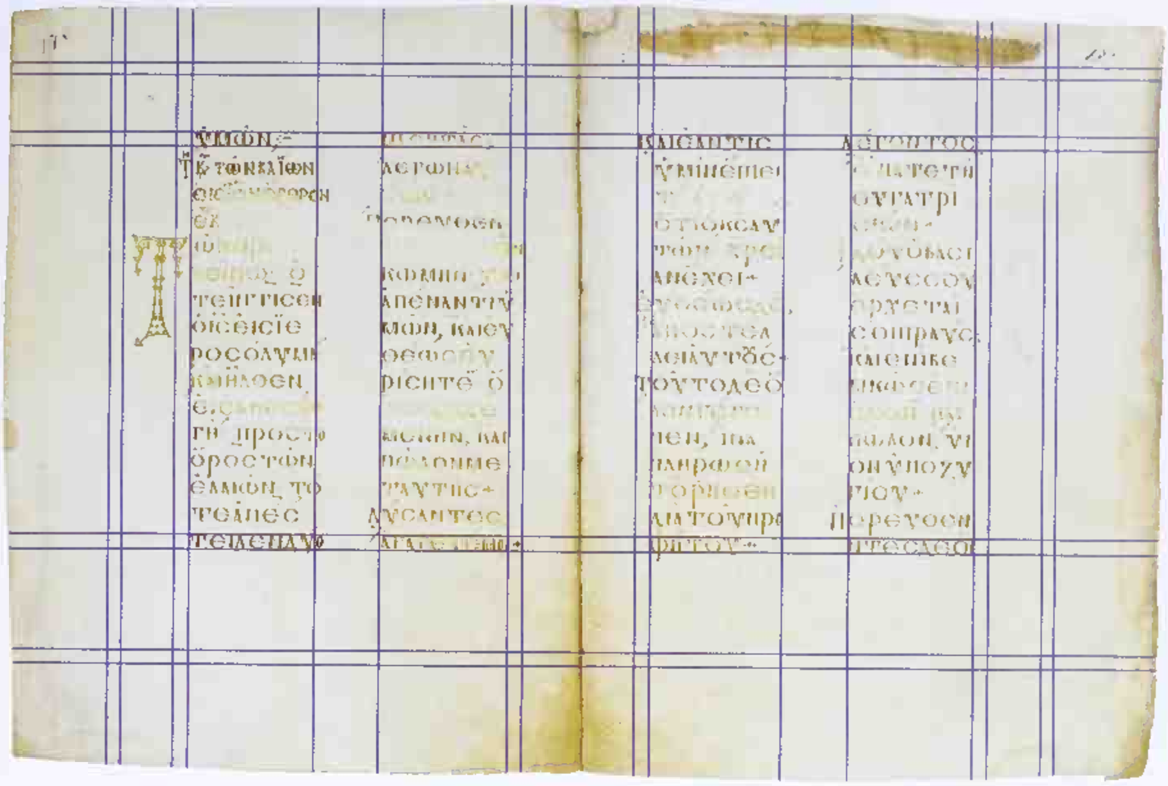
manuscript in this living context of worship, study, and prayer, and from that, gain a few insights into the veneration of the Gospel in the Orthodox Church.

One of the greatest treasures of Saint Catherine's monastery is the manuscript known as the Codex Theodosianus, or the Gospel of the Emperor Theodosius—also called the Codex Aureus, or the Golden Gospel. The first catalogue of Sinai manuscripts, compiled by Archbishop Kosmas in 1704, lists "a very beautiful Gospel," very likely in reference to this manuscript. In 1709, it was shown to Hippolyt Vichensky in the monastery basilica, who wrote that it was the work of the emperor Justinian himself. Lord Prudhoe saw it in 1827 and offered the monks 250 pounds for it, but the monks declined his offer.[1] It was kept from Tischendorf in 1844. This same manuscript was shown to Nikodim Kondakov in 1881, who offered the monks 1,000 pounds from an English lord, but this offer also was declined.[2] And H. V. Morton, who visited the monastery in the 1930s, has written, "I was shown the famous Codex Aureus with its illuminated pages, and many other ancient and valuable manuscripts, now rightly kept under lock and key."[3]

The current binding dates from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, the boards covered in scarlet velvet, with a cover of chased silver depicting the Crucifixion and the Four Evangelists, on which are visible traces of gilding and transparent enamel (cat. no. 7, page 138). On the inside boards one can see original Byzantine textile fragments—purple and white silk, woven in Constantinople in the tenth century. The pattern of the silk shows a large roundel in interlace, and a rinceau motif inhabited by lions. On the endleaves are indications that the boards were also once adorned with metal ornaments.

The manuscript contains 414 pages (it has been paginated, not foliated). At the beginning are seven brilliant illuminations (cat. no. 7, page 139; figs. 60–65). After that, every letter on every page is executed in gold leaf, which sparkles and gleams as the pages are turned. The entire manuscript is splendid and sumptuous, one of the most beautiful to survive from

Figure 56
Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), pp. 178–79 with ruling superimposed.



Byzantine times. The pages are written in two columns, with sixteen lines of text in each. In the seventeenth or eighteenth century, a piece of silk was attached to the top of every recto page to protect the gilded letters, and a strip of paper was glued to the outside edge of the page. More recently, the silk has been removed and pieces of tissue paper inserted between the leaves.

The titles for each lection are written in a decorative script that sets them off from the readings themselves. These are written in a round liturgical majuscule script (*rotonda liturgica*) of great nobility. In addition to the Greek accents, there are musical neumes to guide the intonation of the Gospels. Each lection begins with a decorative initial letter (e.g., figs. 53, 55). No two letters are the same, yet all retain a stylistic unity. The scribe has pricked each page, following a pattern, and then lightly scored lines for the writing of the text. If we trace along these lines, we can see the format used by the scribe. Is it possible to study the dimensions and proportions of these areas and reconstruct how the manuscript was designed? I submit that we can, and that doing so will increase our appreciation of this manuscript.

The leaves of the codex measure 21.8 by 29 centimeters (8⅝ by 11⅜ inches). If we begin with blank pages of the same dimensions as the manuscript, we find that the proportion width to height is three to four. Let us divide a page into three equal columns (fig. 56). Let us further divide the two inner columns, creating in each a subcolumn of one-third the width of that column to the inside of the page, and a subcolumn of two-thirds the width beside it. And now, let us use the innermost subcolumn as the inside margin of the page. We will have created two columns for text, separated by a central margin, all in harmony with the overall width of the page, in that each element is a simple division of the whole.

Next, let us take the width of the column of text, and use the same dimension for the top margin, and let us create a text area that has the same proportions of width to height as the page itself: three to four. If we reproduce the resulting design on the facing page, we will

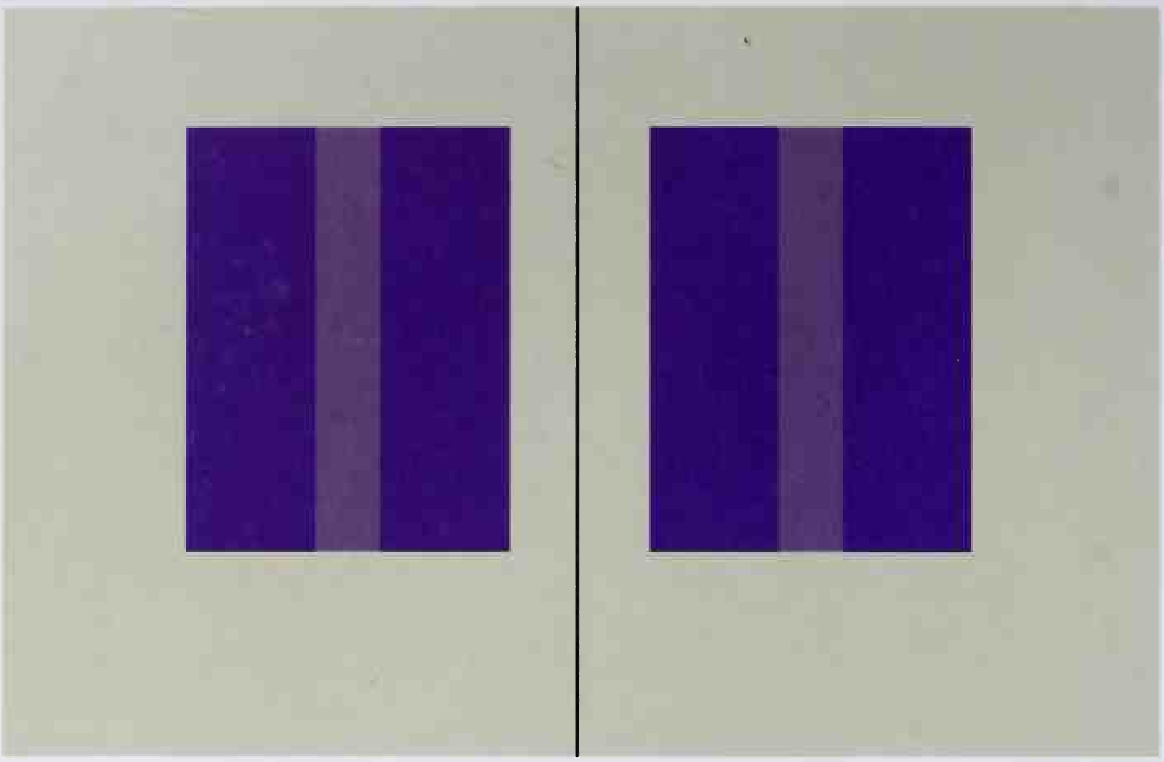


Figure 57
Diagram of page design for the Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (see fig. 56).

have created text areas with the margins in classical progression—the inside margins being the smallest, the upper margins a bit larger, the outside margins larger yet, and the lower margins largest of all (fig. 57). The design has a sense of order and repose. The text area only covers one-third of the page; it is an extravagant design, but then, everything about this manuscript is sumptuous. This, I submit, is how the design was created for this manuscript.

Looking again at the guidelines made by the scribe, we see that the sections within each reading are set off by the first letter being written in the margin. There is an additional guideline scored to the left of the first column, of the same width as the margin between the columns, for the placement of the decorative initial letters. And last, the inner frame of the text area matches the inner frame of each of the illuminations, icon and text being placed in identical relation to the page.

SECTIONS OF THE LECTIONARY

The lectionary is divided into five sections. The first begins with the paschal season, when the Gospel of Saint John is read. This is the only opening in which the text is directly opposite one of the illuminations, the opening verses of the Gospel facing the icon of the Holy Apostle John (fig. 65). The lection is surmounted by a headpiece of intricate leaf patterns facing toward and away from each other to form a series of crosses. The reading begins with the first verse of the Gospel of Saint John, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, "In the beginning was the Word." In this section, there is a reading for every day of the week following Pascha (Easter), and for every Sunday thereafter to the eleventh Sunday after All Saints, with additional readings for mid-Pentecost, the Feast of the Ascension, and the Saturday before Pentecost.

The second section, containing the readings for Lent and Holy Week, has a similar headpiece of intricate crosses, surmounted by different ornaments. The first Gospel appointed is the parable of the prodigal son. Since the manuscript was written at such a large scale, the choice of readings that were included was highly selective. This section contains only the first three

Figure 58
Headpiece for the Triodion, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), p. 161.

readings for the period of the Triodion (the Gospels that precede the commencement of the fast) and selected Gospels from Holy Week. But one of these is the longest in the entire manuscript: the first of the twelve Passion Gospels, read on the evening of Holy and Great Thursday. This is known as Christ's High Priestly Prayer and contains a reading from the Gospel of Saint John, beginning with John 13:31, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him," and concluding with John 18:1, the whole occupying forty-five pages. This Gospel is read traditionally by the hierarch, ὁ Ἀρχιερεύς, the high priest, if he is present.

The third section contains the Gospels for feasts according to the liturgical year, with decorative headpieces generally at the beginning of each month. This section includes the Gospels for only fifteen feast days, two of which are unexpected. For May 10, there is a Gospel appointed for the feast of "the Dedication [of the church] of the Theotokos of our own Monastery." The manuscript was thus created for use at a particular monastery, which is not further specified, though the very splendor of the volume points to an origin in Constantinople, the capital of the empire. The next day, May 11, is the feast of the Dedication of Constantinople to the All-Holy Theotokos, which took place under the emperor Constantine in the year 330. Was the dedication of the monastery church in honor of the Theotokos, commemorated here, deliberately established to coincide with the feast of the dedication of the city itself? The second unexpected commemoration is that for February 7, on which day there is a Gospel for both matins and the Divine Liturgy on the feast of the Righteous Father

Figure 59
Headpiece for the feast day of Hosios Petros of Monobata, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), p. 341.

Peter of Monobata, whose icon is also included among the seven illuminations at the beginning of the volume (cat. no. 7, page 139). This would indicate that the manuscript was commissioned in devotion to the saint. Perhaps it was created for presentation to a monastery dedicated to his memory. As elusive as both of these clues prove to be, they are our only indications for the provenance of this splendid manuscript.

The fourth section contains the lections for the feasts of an apostle and a hierarch, and the fifth section, the eleven Gospels of the Resurrection (*Eothina*), read during matins on successive Sundays. Four of the latter are given in full, with references to where the others may be found in the preceding sections. In all, the manuscript contains seventy-one Gospels, as opposed to the almost five hundred in a modern lectionary. Such a manuscript would have been used on only the most important feast days.

THE TEXT

A few observations should be made about the text of this manuscript. Fifteen words are traditionally written as *nomina sacra* in copies of the scriptures—that is, words abbreviated precisely because they are sacred, with a line drawn over them to indicate the abbreviation. The manuscript conforms to this scheme exactly. The uniformity of the words treated as *nomina sacra* in the oldest manuscripts indicates that this practice extends to the earliest stratum of the Christian scriptures.[4] These *nomina sacra* are a compendium of Orthodox theology.

Applying the Greek adage Καταμανθάνωμεν ἐξ ὀνύχων τὸν λέοντα, "We may know the lion from his claws," the distinctive qualities of the text may be shown from three instances where it departs from the standard text. At John 1:28, this manuscript reads ταῦτα ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐγένετο πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, "These things were done in Bethany beyond Jordan," where the standard text reads Βηθαβαρᾶ, "Bethabara," rather than Βηθανίᾳ, "Bethany." The reading in the Codex Theodosianus is regarded by scholars today as the earliest and most widely attested.

At Matthew 26:27, in the account of the Institution of the Eucharist, we read, καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον, καὶ εὐχαριστήσας, "And He took the cup, and gave thanks." In the preceding verse, we read, λαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν ἄρτον, and then the same words, καὶ εὐχαριστήσας, "Jesus took bread, and gave thanks," rather than the expected reading, καὶ εὐλογήσας, "and blessed it." Most scholars would say this repetition is a transposition of the latter word to the preceding verse, but the reading does occur in a number of early manuscripts, among them texts dating from the fourth and fifth centuries.

And at John 19:27, the standard text reads, καὶ ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ὥρας ἔλαβεν αὐτὴν ὁ μαθητὴς εἰς τὰ ἴδια, "And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." In this manuscript, we read ἡμέρας, "from that day," rather than ὥρας, "from that hour," and ἐκεῖνος has been added after ὁ μαθητής, a clarification that was also felt necessary in the English translation: "that disciple" rather than simply "the disciple."

The unexpected readings in this manuscript would not have been the work of our scribe or scribes only. Rather, they reflect the complexities of a text that had been handed down over many centuries and through many manuscripts. These textual variants are a reminder that even in tenth-century Constantinople, there was not one monolithic Constantinopolitan text; each manuscript preserves a complexity of readings.

THE ILLUMINATION OF CHRIST

The manuscript opens with an icon of Christ Pantocrator—Christ the Ruler of All—depicted on a field of burnished gold, surrounded by a gemlike border (cat. no. 7; fig. 60).[5] He stands on a footstool, holding the Gospel in his left hand, his right hand raised in

Figure 60
Christ, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (detail, cat. no. 7), p. 1. Photo: Father Justin Sinaites.

blessing. On either side are the *nomina sacra* for "Jesus Christ," IC XC. The cross in his halo is executed in bands of translucent pigment the color of deepest gold, outlined in red. The halo itself is indicated by the gold leaf being subtly polished in a circle. The same technique is used to indicate the ground line; a line is scored on the parchment, and the gold below is polished across the field to set it off from the background above. The garments of Christ are painted in imperial purple and the blue of lapis lazuli, the two most costly and precious pigments, which were reserved for depictions of Christ and the Virgin Mary, the All-Holy Theotokos. The purple has been applied with complete mastery in a skillful wash technique not often seen in later iconography: the parchment shows through in a subtle way that gives the appearance of heavy silk. In none of the illuminations do the eyes of those depicted engage the viewer; they look off into the distance. The face of Christ is compelling, commanding, even severe, but at the same time, long-suffering and compassionate.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council met at Nicaea in the year 787 and confirmed the veneration of icons. The council was officially accepted in both East and West, but many bishops in the West remained hostile to it. Charlemagne commissioned a treatise, known as

the *Libri Carolini*, in refutation of the council, and it was also condemned at the Synod of Paris held in 824. While the veneration of icons had become, in the East, the very criterion of Orthodoxy, we cannot say that the theology of the icon was ever really understood in the West. We must describe its central tenets here.

In the year 754, the iconoclast emperor Constantine V proposed a dilemma for the Orthodox: In an icon of Christ, either the divine nature is portrayed along with the human nature, or it is not. Divinity cannot be portrayed. Either the divine nature is confused with the human nature (which is Monophysitism) or else, if the human nature alone is portrayed, the two natures are separated (which is Nestorianism). Saint Theodore the Studite answered with a dilemma of his own for the Iconoclasts: If Christ cannot be portrayed, then either he lacks a genuine human nature (which is Docetism) or his human nature is submerged in his divinity (which is Monophysitism).[6] It is true that Christ's human nature cannot be portrayed, for his human nature is that which he shares with all men in general, and as such, it can be contemplated only by the mind and touched only by thought.[7] But Christ's divine and human natures came together in the one hypostasis, as Saint Theodore goes on to say, "for this is the new mystery of the dispensation, that the divine and human natures came together in the one hypostasis of the Word, which maintains the properties of both natures in the indivisible union."[8]

When we say "man," we speak of that nature which all men hold in common. But when we say "a man," then we speak of the hypostasis, which is the "self-subsisting existence of that which is signified, and (so to speak) the circumscription consisting of certain properties by which those who share the same nature differ one from another."[9] It was in his hypostasis that Christ was perceptible, tangible—in a word, that he was circumscribable—in refutation of the Iconoclasts. "But if he assumed humanity in truth, as we confess, then the hypostasis of Christ is circumscribable: not according to its divinity, which no one has ever beheld, but according to the humanity which is contemplated in an individual manner in it."[10]

And that which is circumscribable is also depictable—hence Christ can be portrayed in icons, as Saint Theodore explains:

> The prototype is in the icon by the similarity of hypostasis, which does not have a different principle of definition for the prototype and for the icon. Therefore we do not understand that the icon lacks equality with the prototype and has an inferior glory in respect to similarity, but in respect to its different essence. The essence of the icon is not of a nature to be venerated, although the one who is portrayed appears in it for veneration. Therefore there is no introduction of a different kind of veneration, but the icon has one and the same veneration with the prototype, in accordance with the identity of likeness.[11]

In his own support, Saint Theodore was able to quote Dionysios the Areopagite, who had written in his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, "Truth in the likeness, the archetype in the image: each in the other except for the difference in essence."[12] The Epistle to the Hebrews, as well, had drawn this same sort of correlation: the tabernacle in the wilderness, in that it was made according to the exemplar revealed by God to Moses, was thus "the pattern of things in the heavens," τὰ ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, and "the holy places made with hands" were "the figures of the true," ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν (HEB. 9:23–24).[13]

The icon is a witness to the Incarnation and to the sanctification that Christ has made possible. Vladimir Lossky has expressed this well:

The two natures of Christ, without being mixed, nonetheless know a certain interpenetration. The divine energies radiate the divinity of Christ and penetrate His humanity; the latter is therefore deified from the moment of the Incarnation, like an iron in a brazier that becomes fire though remaining iron by nature. The Transfiguration partially reveals to the Apostles this blazing of divine energies irradiating the human nature of their Master. This interpenetration of two natures—at once penetration of divinity into flesh and the possibility henceforth acquired by it to penetrate into divinity—is called περιχώρησις—as Saint Maximus the Confessor writes—or, in Latin, *communicatio idiomatum*.[14]

For the Orthodox, then, the icon is the culmination of the doctrines defined by the seven ecumenical councils. The feast day of the restoration of the holy icons is the feast day of Orthodoxy itself and is celebrated in every Orthodox church on the first Sunday of Great Lent.

THE ALL-HOLY THEOTOKOS

The second illumination depicts the Virgin Mary, the All-Holy Theotokos (fig. 61). She also is shown on a field of burnished gold, but the ornamental border is of a different design, as is the case for each of the seven illuminations in this manuscript. To either side are the *nomina sacra* for the words "Mother of God," ΜΗΡ ΘΥ. Her garments are also painted in imperial purple and the blue of lapis lazuli. Her right hand is clasped to her bosom in an attitude of humility, and she looks up in an expression of confident trust and obedience: "Be it unto me according to Thy word" (LUKE 1:38). In her left hand she holds a scroll, for she is

Figure 61
The Virgin Mary, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), p. 3. Photo: Father Justin Sinaites.

praised as Χριστοῦ βίβλος ἔμψυχος, ἐσφραγισμένη Πνεύματι, "Christ's living book, sealed with the Spirit" (*Canon of the Akathist Hymn*, written by Saint Joseph the Hymnographer, ninth century),[15] and as τὰς θεοχαράκτους πλάκας, ἐν αἷς ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ Λόγος, ἐγγραφεὶς ὑπὲρ λόγον, τὸ τοῦ νομικοῦ γράμματος ἐπαχθὲς εἰς τὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐλαθρότητα μετήνεγκε, "the tablets inscribed by the hand of God, in which the Logos of God, having been written in, in a manner beyond expression, hath altered the heaviness of the written Law into the lightness of the Spirit" (*Homily on the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple*, by Saint George of Nicomedia, also from the ninth century).[16]

On March 29, 867, Patriarch Photius gave a sermon on the occasion of the completion of the mosaic depicting the enthroned Virgin Mary and Christ child in the apse of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, a mosaic that may still be seen there today:

> If one called this day the beginning day of Orthodoxy (lest I say something excessive), one would not be far wrong. For though the time is short since the pride of the iconoclastic heresy has been reduced to ashes, and true religion has spread its light to the ends of the world, fired like a beacon by imperial and divine command, this too is our ornament; for it is the achievement of the same God-loving reign. And so, as the eye of the universe, this celebrated and sacred church looked sad with its visual mysteries scraped off, as it were (for it had not yet received the privilege of pictorial restoration), the countenance of Orthodoxy appeared gloomy. Now, casting off this sadness also, and beautifying herself with all her own conspicuous ornaments, and displaying her rich dowry, gladly and joyously she hearkens to the Bridegroom's voice, Who cries out saying, "All fair is my companion, and there is no spot in her. Fair is my companion." For, having mingled the bloom of colors with religious truth, and by means of both having in holy manner fashioned unto herself a holy beauty, and bearing, so to speak, a complete and perfect image of piety, she is seen not only to be fair in beauty surpassing the sons of men, but elevated to an inexpressible fairness of dignity beyond any comparison beside. All fair is my companion.[17]

HOSIOS PETROS AND THE FOUR EVANGELISTS

The third illumination depicts the Righteous Peter, Hosios Petros of Monobata (cat. no. 7, page 139). He is clad in his monastic habit: cassock, schema, analabos, belt, and rhason. His face is that of the uncompromising ascetic; his hands are raised in awe as he experiences the grace of God. We know little about Hosios Petros today. His name was included in the *Synaxarion* of the Church of Constantinople for February 7.[18] From this, the commemoration entered the collected *Lives of the Saints*, though without any biographical information. On his feast day, the following verses are read after the Sixth Ode in matins:

> Ἀγῶνα τὸν μέγιστον ἀνύσας Πέτρος
> Ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἴληφε πάντιμον στέφος.
> [Peter, having completed exceeding great ascetical struggles,
> Hath received an all-honorable crown in heaven.]

Even the place of Monobata is not known, though there are certain indications about its location. In the year 944, Metropolitan Alexander of Nicaea was deprived of his office and exiled to the Monastery of Monobata, where he was confined in a cave. From there, he managed to write twenty letters, all of which describe the tribulations he was forced to endure.[19] In his first letter, he writes that he has been banished "to the farthest reaches of the Emperor's land" (1.46), and in his third letter, he writes that he has been sent "unto the Cimmerians" (3.10). The Cimmerians inhabited the area to the north of the Caucasus Mountains in the

eighth century BC, from whence they invaded the eastern provinces of Asia Minor. The biblical land of Gomer is associated with the Cimmerians. After their defeat in the sixth century BC, a remnant of the Cimmerian population continued for a time to survive in the Crimea, on the northern coast of the Black Sea. But in Greek mythology, Cimmeria was the land of cold and darkness. Odysseus traveled there to speak with the shades of the dead. "The vessel came to the bounds of eddying Ocean, where lie the land and the city of the Cimmerians, covered with mist and cloud. Never does the resplendent sun look on this people with his beams, neither when he climbs towards the stars of heaven nor when once more he comes earthwards from the sky; dismal night overhangs these wretches always" (*Odyssey* 11.13–19). And in the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes we read, "Here is the Cavern of Hades with its overhanging trees and rocks, from the chill depths of which an icy breath comes up and each morning covers everything with sparkling rime that melts under the midday sun" (*Argonautica* 2.734–39). If, then, Metropolitan Alexander's reference to the Cimmerians is not purely literary, it would seem to indicate a place at the most distant coasts of the Black Sea, "in the border area between Pontus and Armenia," as Jean Darrouzès has suggested,[20] or, as seems more likely, "in Byzantine Cherson of the Crimea," as Thomas Pratsch has written in a recent study.[21] After five months, Alexander was allowed to return to Constantinople, where he became a professor of rhetoric. In reading of the hardships that he endured, we also learn something of the austerities in which Hosios Petros won his enduring crown.

Philip Sherrard has written that a saint was

> one who, breaking through the barrier set by the forces of negation and illusion between man and God, and fusing the human and divine natures once more in vital conjunction, gave fullest evidence of that participation in the life of the Spirit by which human existence might be crowned. Hence the regard in which he was held was unrivalled, even by that in which the Emperor was held. The Emperor might be God's elect. The saint or holy man was more: he was an actual citizen in the here and now of the present life of the heavenly Kingdom, living holocaust of divine energies, witness of God, and in a certain sense God Himself. As such he was, like the Mother of God herself, a mediator between earth and heaven. He too was a source of mercy, miracle, and guidance, the father of the people among whom he dwelt, their healer and deliverer.[22]

Iconoclasts destroyed icons and relics. And since monastics were their most obdurate opponents, many monasteries were closed and their monks sent into exile or even put to death. This manuscript marks not only the restoration of the traditional piety, but also its veneration and exaltation: a Gospel written in letters of gold, with seven luminous icons, the whole bound in purple and white silk and adorned with metal ornaments, very likely the work of the imperial scriptoria of Constantinople. And it honors Hosios Petros, a monk renowned for his ascetic labors.

The holy man has been depicted in a completely dematerialized form; there is not the slightest hint of a body beneath the robes of his monastic habit. The Four Evangelists, in contrast, stand in the classical manner: the weight of the body is supported on one leg, with the other bent and the entire body turned slightly. These portraits have a tension and a dynamic quality that contrasts with the calm and repose of Hosios Petros. The Holy Apostle Matthew is an older man (fig. 62). His face is that of the initiate into sacred mysteries; he has seen, and understood. The garments are painted in muted rose and gray-blue, complementary colors used to great effect. Saint Mark is a young man (fig. 63). The folds of his garments are executed in agitated strokes, completely appropriate for one whose favorite expression was καὶ

εὐθύς, "and straightway," "and forthwith." The depiction of Saint Luke is more refined, the purple border on his tunic rendered in translucent pigment (fig. 64). He was the beloved physician and constant companion of the Holy Apostle Paul: "Demas hath forsaken me. Only Luke is with me" (2 TIM. 4:10–11). The last is the Holy Apostle John, the Son of Thunder, who could write, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (JOHN 1:1, 14; fig. 65).

This lectionary is one of the most brilliant examples of what has been called the Macedonian Renaissance, when the classical manner of painting (which had never been

Figure 62
Evangelist Matthew, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), p. 8.

Figure 63
Evangelist Mark, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), p. 10.

entirely lost) was strongly evident and at the same time in perfect harmony with the more abstract and nonclassical mode. Through both modes, the Byzantine iconographer was able to convey the physical and the spiritual, the human and the divine. And, as Kurt Weitzmann has pointed out, "One of the reasons for the great inner strength of Byzantine art is that the two strands, the classical and the non-classical, are often used for artistic contrast, but nonetheless they never seem to be in conflict with each other."[23]

ICON AND GOSPEL

We know that likenesses of Christ and the apostles were preserved and venerated from early Christian times, but it was only when the place of icons in Christian worship and devotion became an object of dispute that a way had to be found to express a doctrinal justification for this veneration. The resulting doctrine was not something completely new, but a clarification of what had been inherent in the faith from the beginning. A similar pattern of development can be traced for other doctrines in the early Church. The Christian Gospel, in contrast, has always been held in honor and needed no such doctrinal justification.

We have traced the Orthodox veneration of icons in some detail. Having done so, we may now use these insights in general, and this manuscript in particular, to explore something of the Orthodox veneration of the Gospel. Those who defended the veneration of icons pointed out the correlation between sacred image and sacred text. Referring to the "divinely written Gospels," Saint Theodore the Studite said, Christ "nowhere told anyone to write down the 'concise word,' yet His image was drawn in writing by the Apostles, and has been preserved up to the present. Whatever is marked there with paper and ink, the same is marked on the icon with varied pigments or some other medium. For the great Basil says, 'Whatever the words of the narrative offer, the picture silently shows the same by imitation.'"[24]

He also said, "So whether in an image, or in the Gospel, or in the cross, or in any other consecrated object: there God is manifestly worshipped 'in spirit and in truth,' as the materials are exalted by the raising of the mind towards God. The mind does not remain with the materials, because it does not trust in them: that is the error of the idolaters. Through the materials, rather, the mind ascends towards the prototype: this is the faith of the Orthodox."[25]

Saint John of Damascus, who was a generation older than Saint Theodore, wrote *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*. In his third treatise we read,

Figure 64 (opposite, left) Evangelist Luke, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), p. 12.

Figure 65 (opposite, right) Evangelist John, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (cat. no. 7), p. 14.

> The Lord blessed His disciples, saying, "Many kings and prophets longed to see what you see, and they did not see, and to hear what you hear, and they did not hear. Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear." Therefore the Apostles saw Christ bodily and what He endured and His miracles and they heard His words; we also long to see and to hear and to be blessed. They saw face to face, since He was present to them bodily; in our case, however, since He is not present bodily, even as we hear His words through books and are sanctified in our hearing and through it we are blessed in our soul, and venerate and honor the books, through which we hear His words, so also through the depiction of images we behold the form of His bodily character and the miracles and all that He endured, and we are sanctified and assured, and we rejoice and are blessed, and we revere and honor and venerate His bodily character. Beholding His bodily form, we also understand the glory of His divinity as powerful. For since we are twofold, fashioned of soul and body, and our soul is not naked but, as it were, covered by a mantle, it is impossible for us to reach what is intelligible apart from what is bodily. Just as therefore through words perceived by the senses we hear with bodily ears and understand what is spiritual, so through bodily vision we come to spiritual contemplation. For this reason Christ assumed body and soul, since human kind consists of body and soul; therefore also baptism is twofold, of water and the Spirit; as well as communion and prayer and psalmody, all of them twofold, bodily and spiritual, and offerings of light and incense.[26]

During matins every Sunday, the priest reads the appointed lection for the Resurrection, after which he carries the Gospel into the center of the church, and the faithful venerate and kiss the Gospel, reverencing the Savior now risen from the dead. In the Divine Liturgy, the priest comes into the center of the church with the Gospel, holding it on high and proclaiming, Σοφία, Ὀρθοί, "Wisdom. Stand aright." And the choirs chant, Δεῦτε, προσκυνήσωμεν καὶ προσπέσωμεν Χριστῷ, "Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ." Given this veneration for the physical volume of the Gospel, the distinction drawn by these two saints is all the more significant; since each of us consists of body and soul, "it is impossible for us to reach what is intelligible apart from what is bodily." The mind, however, does not remain with what is tangible but ascends from it to the prototype.

SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

With this understanding of the ascent to the prototype, we have come on an insight that is of the greatest importance. It is a recurring theme in the writings of Saint Maximus the Confessor, who lived in the first half of the seventh century and was thus a contemporary of Saint John Climacus, abbot of Sinai. If we examine carefully what he has written about the Gospel, we will gain further insights into the Orthodox understanding of this ascent, and the link between the tangible and the intelligible, the material and the spiritual.

In his *Two Hundred Texts on Theology*, Saint Maximus writes that when the Logos of God first draws near to men who cannot come to the unmediated perception of spiritual realities, he selects things that are familiar to them, combining various stories, enigmas, parables, and dark sayings. In this he is like a teacher who uses simple stories and illustrations to bring students to an understanding of ideas they would not have been able to grasp directly. "The Logos becomes incarnate in each of the recorded sayings." Saint Maximus thus draws the closest parallel between the incarnate Word and the Word expressing Himself in syllables and letters. But when the understanding is opened to perceive the inner meaning of scripture, then "He is contemplated in His true simplicity," as Christ was with God the Father from before all ages.[27]

In this same work Saint Maximus draws the contrast between letter and spirit:

> The initial stages of learning about religious devotion are naturally related to the flesh. For in our first encounter with religion we come into contact with the letter and not the spirit. But as we get nearer to the spirit and refine the materiality of words with the more subtle forms of contemplation, we come to dwell—so far as is possible for man—purely in the pure Christ, so that we can say with Saint Paul, "Though we have known Christ according to the flesh, now we no longer know Him in this manner." That is to say, we no longer know Him according to the flesh because, through the intellect's naked encounter with the Logos stripped of the veils covering Him, we have advanced from knowing Him according to the flesh to knowing His "glory as of the only-begotten Son of the Father."[28]

These distinctions are further developed in Saint Maximus's *Mystagogia*, in which he draws a series of progressions. The Holy Scriptures can be seen as comprising Old Testament and New, or the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel. These progressions, these ascents, can be made in that the scriptures are an ordered whole. But, more strikingly, he goes on to say,

> the historical letter of the entire Holy Scriptures, Old Testament and New, is a body, while the meaning of the letter and the purpose to which it is directed is the soul.... And let him through an informed study of Holy Scripture wisely get past its letter and rise up to the Holy Spirit, in whom are found the fulness of all goodness and the treasures of knowledge and the secrets of wisdom. If anyone is shown to be interiorly worthy, he will find God Himself engraved on the tablets of his heart through the grace of the Spirit, and with face unveiled will see as in a mirror the glory of God, once he has removed the veil of the letter.[29]

The Holy Apostle Paul had written of the veil that conceals the meaning of scripture, and of the soul reflecting the glory of God as in a mirror, "but we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 COR. 3:18). We will not fully appreciate these references to a mirror unless we know how mirrors were understood in the Greek world. Plato, in an appendix to the *Timaeus*, explains that mirror images are formed when the light from the eye meets the light from what is seen on the surface of the mirror, and these two rays of light mingle there to form the image. Thus mirror images actually exist. The mirror, when it is clear, accurately conveys the image that is seen, even as the soul, when it has been purified, becomes like a mirror reflecting the glory of God; it is changed into a real image of God, though God and his image remain distinct according to nature.[30]

In his *Ambigua*, Saint Maximus carries these observations yet further as he considers the significance of the Transfiguration of Christ; not only did Christ himself become radiant with light, but his garments also shone with unearthly splendor. He writes, "The whitened garments conveyed a symbol of the words of Holy Scripture, which in this case became shining and clear and limpid to the Apostles, and were grasped by the mind without any riddling puzzle or symbolic shadow, revealing the meaning that lay hidden within them."[31] The garments can be understood as the words of Holy Scripture, while the incarnate Word is Himself the concepts conveyed by scripture. The words become luminous precisely because they are the garments of the living Word, delineating His person.

The Transfiguration was the occasion on which the eyes of the disciples were opened to behold the "blazing of divine energies irradiating the human nature of their Master." But it was also a prefiguring of the Second Coming, and this contrast between the two advents of Christ furnishes Saint Maximus, in his *First Century on Theology*, with yet another illustration for the distinctions we have been tracing:

Figure 66
Headpiece for the feast day of the Transfiguration, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (detail, fig. 53).

To the more diligent students of Holy Scripture the Lord is clearly shown as having two forms. The first is common and more popular, and it can be perceived by many. The text "We saw Him and He had no comeliness or beauty" refers to this form. The second is more hidden, and it can be perceived only by a few, that is, by those who have already become like the holy apostles Peter and John, before whom the Lord was transfigured with a glory that overwhelmed the senses. The text "Thou art fairer than the children of men" refers to this form. The first of these two forms is consonant to beginners; the second to those perfected in spiritual knowledge, in so far as such perfection is possible. The first is an image of the Lord's initial advent, to which the literal meaning of the Gospel refers, and which by means of suffering purifies those practicing the virtues. The second prefigures the second and glorious advent, in which the spirit of the Gospel is apprehended, and which by means of wisdom transfigures and deifies those imbued with spiritual knowledge: because of the transfiguration of the Logos within them "they reflect with unveiled face the glory of the Lord."[32]

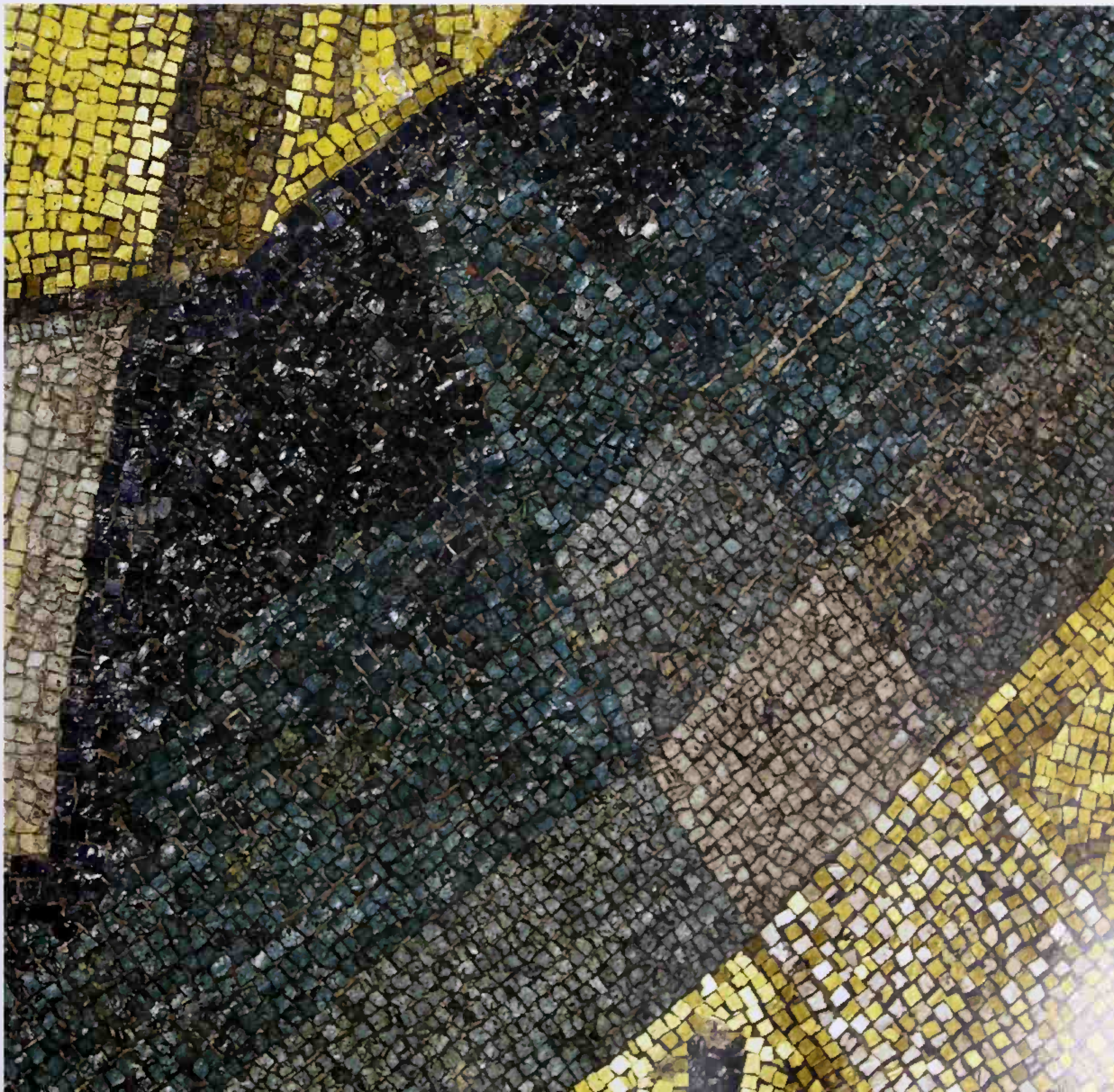
ΜΩΥCΗC
ΙΩΑΝΝΗ C
ΙΑΚΩ ΒΟC
ΠΕΤΡ ΟC
ΥΠΕΡ CΩΤΗΡΙΑC ΤΩΝ ΚΑΡΠΟΦΟΡΗ

TRANSFIGURATION

These references become all the more significant when we consider that this very Gospel was read at Sinai beneath the incomparable mosaic of the Transfiguration of Christ, a mosaic dating to the middle of the sixth century (fig. 67). Christ is radiant in glory, his face shining as the sun, his raiment white and glistening. His right hand is raised in blessing, while his left hand remains veiled. He is depicted within a mandorla of graduated blue tesserae set in four concentric bands, with the darkest blue at the center. Eight rays of light extend outward from his person. The artist has achieved this by using the next-higher register of color within each of the bands, until the light emerges white from the mandorla (fig. 68). A ray of light extends to each of the figures who are with Christ: the holy prophets Elijah and Moses, and the Holy Apostles John, Peter, and James.

Figure 67 (opposite) Transfiguration mosaic in the apse. Photo. Father Justin Sinaites.

Figure 68 (below) Transfiguration mosaic (detail, fig. 67).



The blue tesserae call to mind God's revelation to Moses and the Seventy Elders of Israel at the God-trodden Mount of Sinai: "And they saw the place where the God of Israel stood: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the appearance of the firmament of heaven in its clearness. And of the elect of Israel not even one was lost; also they appeared in the dwelling place of God, and did eat and drink" (EXOD. 24:10–11).

Evagrius the Solitary, who lived in the fourth century, has invoked these verses as a spiritual place to which all are summoned to enter: "When the mind has put off the old man and clothed itself with grace, then during prayer it will see its own nature like a sapphire or the color of heaven. In Scripture this is called the dwelling place of God that was seen by the Elders on Mount Sinai."[33]

All of these reflections reach their culmination in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, embracing both the revelations of God in the past and the fulfillment of time in the future, bringing them to life in the timeless reality of the liturgy.

We may think of this very manuscript, then, raised on high before the mosaic of the Transfiguration at the entrance with the Gospel, the priest proclaiming, Σοφία, Ὀρθοί, and bearing it into the sanctuary, placing it on the Holy Table, inviting the faithful to enter into the mysteries set forth. Saint Theodore the Studite has written, concerning the holy icons, "The copy shares the glory of its prototype, as a reflection shares the brightness of the light."[34] It is in this sense that this manuscript also may be understood as an icon. The letters are radiant and gleaming, the splendor of the materials a tribute to the words of the Gospel; they reflect the glory of the prototype, beckoning us to ascend to the spirit of the Gospel, into the presence of the Logos himself.

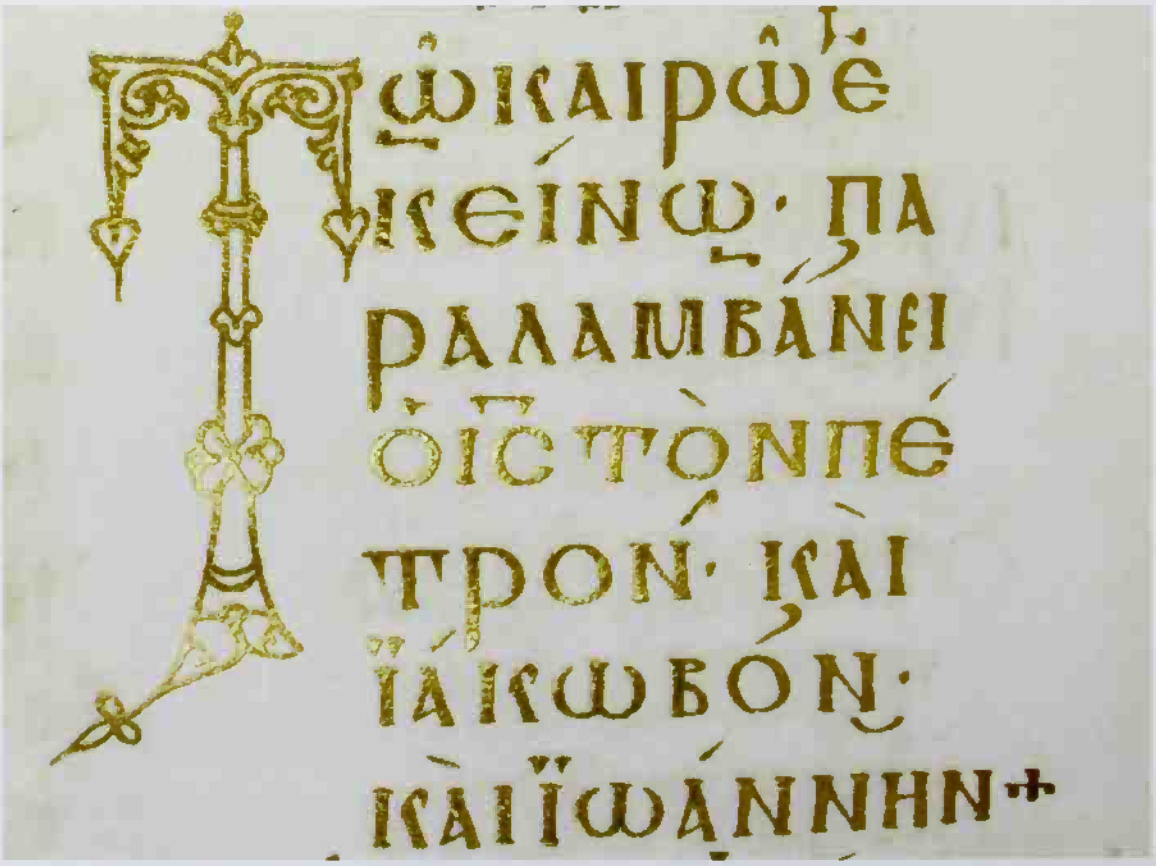


Figure 69
Initial T, Gospel for the feast day of the Transfiguration, Codex Theodosianus (Sinai cod. 204), ca. 975–1000 (detail, fig. 53)

NOTES

I would like to express my thanks to Annie Labatt, who served untiringly as research assistant for this essay. I would also like to express my thanks to Professor David Armstrong, and to Evangelos Zournatzis, for their help.

1. Algernon Percy, first Baron Prudhoe, and from 1842, fourth Duke of Northumberland. In 1828 he purchased a number of Coptic manuscripts from the Monastery of Deir al-Baramus in the Wadi Natrun, which he presented to Archdeacon Henry Tattam. These are now in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England.
2. Clark 1953, p. 30.
3. Morton 1938, p. 314.
4. Roberts 1979, p. 46.
5. Frantz 1934.
6. Roth 1981, p. 11. See also Lossky 1983, p. 138. The three essays by Saint Theodore the Studite have recently been edited and beautifully printed, with a translation into modern Greek facing each page of the original text: Dalkos 1998.
7. Antirrheticus 3.16 (*PG*, vol. 99, col. 397A; translated in Roth 1981, p. 83).
8. Antirrheticus 1.4 (*PG*, vol. 99, cols. 333A–B; translated in Roth 1981, p. 23).
9. Antirrheticus 3.17 (*PG*, vol. 99, col. 397B; translated in Roth 1981, pp. 83–84). For a discussion of the term *hypostasis*, see Lossky 1998, pp. 50–55.
10. Antirrheticus 3.24 (*PG*, vol. 99, col. 401A; translated in Roth 1981, p. 87). The reference is to 1 Timothy 2:5.
11. Antirrheticus 3.3.1 (*PG*, vol. 99, cols. 420D–421A; translated in Roth 1981, p. 103).
12. Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Ecclesiastical Hierachy*, 4.3.1 (*PG*, vol. 3, col. 473C), quoted in Saint Theodore, Antirrheticus 2.11 (*PG*, vol. 99, col. 357C; translated in Roth 1981, p. 48).
13. Compare Antirrheticus 1.6 (*PG*, vol. 99, col. 336B; translated in Roth 1981, p. 25).
14. Lossky 2001, p. 99.
15. *PG*, vol. 105, col. 1020A.
16. *PG*, vol. 100, col. 1425b.
17. C. Mango 1958, pp. 291–92.
18. Delehaye 1902, col. 450; compare also col. 988.
19. Darrouzès 1960, pp. 67–98.
20. Darrouzès 1960, p. 74.
21. Pratsch 2004, p. 255. In AD 1029, George Baravatzé, abbot of Iveron, was summoned to Constantinople and banished to the Monastery of Monobata, where he died (Peeters 1917–18, pp. 61–62). And in AD 1041, the Empress Zoe exiled John the Orphanotrophos to the Monastery of Monotaba (Thurn 1973, pp. 416, 423). In spite of these historical references, the exact location remains uncertain.
22. Sherrard 1965, p. 94.
23. Weitzmann 1966a, p. 174.
24. Antirrheticus 1.10 (*PG*, vol. 99, cols. 340D–341A, translated in Roth 1981, pp. 30–31).
25. Antirrheticus 1.13 (*PG*, vol. 99, col. 344D; translated in Roth 1981, p. 34).
26. Louth 2003, p. 93.
27. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware 1981, p. 151.
28. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware 1981, p. 152.
29. Berthold 1985, p. 197.
30. Louth 1981, pp. 79–80.
31. Louth 1996, p. 109.
32. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware 1981, pp. 134–35.
33. Evagrius 1957, p. 54.
34. Antirrheticus 1.8 (*PG*, vol. 99, col. 337B; translated in Roth 1981, p. 28).

Christian Pilgrimage to Sinai until the Late Fifteenth Century

David Jacoby

Christian pilgrimage to holy sites began in the early fourth century. It was generated by the sanctification of places associated with sacred events recorded in the Bible, a process furthered by Emperor Constantine I, who ruled from 324 to 337, and by Church leaders in the following decades. These sites were places of memory that one could see, touch, and venerate, and thereby partake in their holiness. Pilgrimage, a spiritual experience and a devotional journey, also extended to the visitation of living personages.[1]

Christian monks had settled in isolated communes in the southern Sinai peninsula beginning in the third century in order to be near biblical sites. Monasticism in that region reached its peak in the sixth and seventh centuries. The three holiest locations were Jebel Musa, or Mount Moses, 2,285 meters (7,497 feet) high (identified in the past with Mount Sinai), which witnessed the giving of the Covenant; the site of the Burning Bush at the foot of Mount Sinai, in which God appeared to Moses—a location marked by a church by the late fourth century; and, finally, the cave between Mount Sinai and Jebel Sufsafa, formerly identified with Mount Horeb, in which the prophet Elijah took refuge and was addressed by God. Christian pilgrimage to sites associated with Moses was a new phenomenon, since there was no Jewish tradition of pilgrimage to Sinai.[2] The Spanish nun Egeria, who visited the region in 383/384, provided the earliest known personal account of Christian pilgrimage to Sinai, yet she was not the first pilgrim to the region. The monks told her that it was customary to recite a prayer when one first caught sight of the Mountain of God. Egeria also displayed intense interest in the ascetic hermits living in the harsh conditions of Sinai. Local monks served as her guides to holy sites and people.[3] This remained the rule in the following centuries.

The nature of pilgrimage to Sinai changed over time. Emperor Justinian I ordered the construction of the fortified Mount Sinai monastery between 548 and 565.[4] The Burning Bush was included in its compound, and from an early date the monastery took the name of the "Virgin of the Burning Bush" (Greek, *tou Batou*). The existence of the monastery must have stimulated Christian pilgrimage to Sinai. Its position as the focus of that movement was enhanced by the gradual decline of the monastic movement in the region, which began after the Arab conquest of the seventh century and lasted into the tenth century.[5]

Figure 70 (opposite)
Apse, Chapel of the Burning Bush. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt
Photo: Bruce White.

By that time Saint Catherine, a martyr who died because she upheld her Christian faith, was being revered both in Byzantium and in the West. According to an early Greek version of her life, her beheaded body was carried by angels to the top of the highest mountain in Sinai

(later known as Jebel Katrina, or Mount Saint Catherine, 2,683 m [8,803 ft.]). The Byzantine hagiographer Symeon Metaphrastes wrote a life of Saint Catherine in the early 960s, from which other lives in Greek and Latin derive. Later accounts report that the saint's body was transferred from the mountain where it lay to the Sinai monastery, where it continuously exuded oil. The Byzantine depictions of Saint Catherine, dating from the tenth century onward, did not stress the saint's connection to Sinai, contrary to the saint's cult that spread in the West beginning in the mid-eleventh century.[6] An Armenian inscription in eastern Sinai referring to Saint Catherine has been tentatively ascribed to the tenth or eleventh century.[7] Such an early dating is rather doubtful, since the saint's cult in the monastery itself is documented only from the twelfth century onward.

The evidence regarding pilgrimage to Sinai is sparse, scattered, and unevenly distributed over time until the fourteenth century, when it becomes almost continuous. It consists of pilgrimage guides focused on biblical geography, personal pilgrimage accounts, hagiographical texts, as well as archaeological remains and inscriptions. It has often been suggested that various painted panels, icons, manuscripts, and other objects preserved at the Sinai monastery were personally brought there by donors on pilgrimage. However, these items could well have been transferred by monks settling in the monastery,[8] or by monks from the Sinai monastery stationed in locations such as Acre and Cairo.[9] Similarly, it cannot be taken for granted that works displaying iconographic or stylistic elements similar to those present in objects currently at the monastery or related to its cults were produced by individuals who had visited the site,[10] since we cannot ascertain whether the objects were indeed in the monastery at the time ascribed to these visits.

Precious evidence about the pilgrim's itineraries is offered by the few extant pilgrimage accounts from the period preceding the Arab conquest of Sinai in the first half of the seventh century, as well as by inscriptions and crosses carved on rocks, in the monastery, and at holy sites in its vicinity. The shortest way from Jerusalem and the main pilgrim route in the late sixth and early seventh centuries led through the Negev to Aila (now Elat), and from there to the Sinai monastery. The largest concentration of Armenian and Georgian inscriptions and crosses has been found in Wadi Haggag along the route connecting Aila to the monastery. Another itinerary from Jerusalem reached the Mediterranean coast and from there proceeded to Pelusion, Clysma at the head of the Gulf of Suez, then southward to Gharandal, from which three routes led to Mount Sinai (fig. 71). A clay ampulla found in a pilgrim's grave along one of these routes attests to pilgrimage from Egypt. A section of the route leading from Raithou on the Gulf of Suez to the monastery was paved in the sixth century or later to allow the passage of camels.[11]

An Ethiopian pilgrim has left an inscription in Wadi Haggag, ascribed to the second half of the sixth or the early seventh century. It is likely that the Syriac and most Greek inscriptions nearby belong to the same period.[12] Some Armenian monks lived in the monastery in the sixth and the first half of the seventh centuries.[13] A few sources mention large groups of several hundred Armenian pilgrims visiting Sinai, which must have included many laymen. One may wonder whether these numbers were common, especially from 614 to 627, when the Persians ruling over the Holy Land apparently encouraged Armenian pilgrimage,[14] or whether these groups were rather exceptional and therefore noted. Armenian pilgrimage continued after the Arab conquest, mainly through Wadi Haggag, if we rely on inscriptions.[15] Georgian pilgrimage is attested by a few graffiti both in western and eastern Sinai, dated to the period from the seventh to the eleventh century. This pilgrimage may have been stimulated

Figure 71

Map of the Sinai peninsula and surrounding areas, showing pilgrimage routes. Map. © Sofer Cartography Ltd., Jerusalem, Israel.

by the intensification of relations between Georgia and the Sinai monastery from the mid-ninth century on, with monasteries in Syria-Palestine presumably acting as intermediaries. King Giorgi II (r. 915–59) ordered hymns and sermons from the Georgian monk Ioane Minchi on Mount Sinai.[16] Saint Elijah the Younger, a Greek born in Sicily, became a monk in the Holy Land and visited Sinai, presumably in the 870s.[17] Western or Latin pilgrimage to the region is implied by four pieces of evidence. The first three are tiny tags accompanying stones, preserved respectively in the Sancta Sanctorum at the Vatican, at Chelles, and at Sens (the latter two in France), identifying these relics as coming from "Mount Sinai, where Moses stood." On paleographic grounds the tags have been ascribed respectively to the seventh–eighth century, around 800, and the early ninth century. In addition we have the story of a nobleman from Brittany, Frotmundus, who was ordered between 830 and 850 to undertake pilgrimages as penance or punishment, one of them to Sinai.[18]

Holy Land pilgrimage was severely affected for some years by the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher by the Egyptian sultan al-Hakim in 1009, and again later in the eleventh century by unsafe conditions in Egyptian-held territory in Syria and Palestine. Byzantine pilgrimage appears to have been a regular mass movement involving ecclesiastical and lay visitors, both men and women, while Latin pilgrimage was irregular and on a much smaller scale.[19] Visits to Sinai are not directly attested in that period.[20] They are, however, suggested by a Latin guidebook, compiled in the first decade of the twelfth century and based on an earlier one, which states the distance from the Jordan River to Mount Sinai and, strangely, mentions "a great oil jar [there], which never ceases to produce oil."[21] This anticipates the reference of later pilgrims to Saint Catherine's oil in the monastery.

The establishment of Christian rule over Jerusalem and the holiest Christian sites in 1099 in the wake of the First Crusade furthered large-scale Western, or Latin, pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which reached its peak in the thirteenth century. Thousands of pilgrims arrived each year on board Western ships in Acre, except during the city's occupation by Egyptian forces from 1187 to 1191.[22] Few pilgrims appear to have visited Sinai. The Englishman Saewulf and the Germans John of Würzburg and Theodoric (on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1102, ca. 1165, and 1169, respectively) refrained from the journey to Sinai and merely reproduced the information about the distance from the Jordan to Mount Sinai from a book similar to the early-twelfth-century guide mentioned above.[23] The poorly informed Latin author of a treatise written around 1150 asserted that smoke constantly rose from Mount Sinai.[24] However, a version of the treatise on holy sites (Ms. D) by Rorgo Fretellus of Nazareth, composed in the reign of King Amalric of Jerusalem (1162–73), offers a detailed description of the monastery and of the monks' practices.[25]

The monastery remained in the Egyptian political orbit in the first decades of the twelfth century. The construction of a mosque within its walls, intended for Muslim travelers, was completed by 1106. A source from the 1140s at the earliest claims that in 1116 the monks requested the Latin king of Jerusalem, Baldwin I, to refrain from a visit for fear of Egyptian reprisals. The story does not warrant any conclusion regarding Latin pilgrimage to the monastery in that period, regardless of whether it is authentic. In 1134 the Egyptian caliph Hafiz confirmed the earlier privileges of the monastery. Crusader or Frankish rule around the Gulf of Elat/Aqaba was extended at the earliest under King Fulk of Jerusalem (r. 1131–43). As a result, the Sinai peninsula was included in the lordship of Montréal in Transjordan and the ecclesiastical province of Petra. In a letter purportedly written around 1150, a monk from Grandmont, in the diocese of Lyons, claimed to have obtained the oil of

Saint Catherine at the monastery, yet there are serious doubts about the reliability of his account. Philip of Nablus, lord of Montréal from 1161 to 1166, reported that on pilgrimage to the monastery he persuaded the abbot to open Saint Catherine's tomb and grant him a relic of the saint, yet he failed to mention oil.[26] This is the earliest secure testimony to the saint's cult in the monastery. A Latin monk of the second half of the twelfth century, reporting his Sinai pilgrimage, refers to Saint Catherine.[27]

The earliest reference to the celebration of the saint in the Sinai monastery appears in the monastery's *Typikon* of 1214 regulating liturgical services, drafted by Abbot Symeon.[28] Three years later the German Thietmar fulfilled his wish to see the body of Saint Catherine that exudes oil. In order to enhance the prestige of the saint's relics, the monks were asserting then that the lord of Montréal, Philip of Nablus, had attempted to snatch them.[29] By that time the presence of the relics in the monastery was obviously well known among Latin pilgrims arriving in the Holy Land. The monks must have been attentive to that development, as well as to the intensification of Latin pilgrimage to the Holy Land after 1191, since they had a dependency in Acre.[30] It is not impossible, therefore, that they sanctioned the cult of Saint Catherine in order to stimulate Latin pilgrimage to their monastery.

The awareness of Abbot Symeon of the material interests of his monastery is well illustrated by his endeavor to safeguard the monastery's property. At his request Doge Pietro Ziani granted in 1212 Venice's protection over the monastery's numerous assets in Crete, a Byzantine province until its occupation by Venice in the early thirteenth century, and in 1217 Pope Honorius III extended papal protection over all the monastery's possessions. In addition to Crete, these possessions were located in the Frankish states of the Levant, Cyprus, and Constantinople, all under Latin rule at that time, as well as in Alexandria and Damascus.[31] There is no evidence that the monastery's presence in these locations stimulated pilgrimage to Sinai.

Significantly, the letters of the Venetian doge and the pope in 1212 and 1217, respectively, refer to Saint Mary of Mount Sinai, a wording most likely reflecting the language of the abbot's request for protection. It is also noteworthy that among the monastery's dependencies only one bore the name of Saint Catherine, namely in Acre, whereas elsewhere they carried the names of other saints. It follows that at that time the newly introduced cult of Saint Catherine did not yet overshadow the long-established cults of the Virgin and Moses in the monastery. The cohabitation of the three cults is confirmed by the *Typikon* of 1214, a thirteenth-century panel depicting Saint Catherine and the Virgin of the Burning Bush (cat. no. 56), and various other icons.[32] This cohabitation is still attested by some Western pilgrim accounts of the fifteenth century, although by then Western devotion to Saint Catherine had assumed primacy. One such account refers to "the church of Saint Mary of the Bush (Latin, *de Rubo*), which we now call the church of Saint Catherine."[33] This contrasts with the attitude of the popes, who until 1517 exclusively referred to the Virgin in their letters addressed to the monastery.[34]

The formal adoption of Saint Catherine's cult in the monastery in 1214 does not seem to have generated a large-scale Latin response in the short term. As noted earlier, Thietmar traveled to the monastery three years later, thirty years after the end of Frankish rule over most of the Holy Land and Sinai. Significantly, he grew a beard and dressed like a Georgian or, according to another version of his account, like a Greek monk to conceal his Latin identity while traveling through Muslim territory.[35] Incidentally, coming from the region east of the Jordan, he must have followed the customary pilgrimage route from Aila through eastern Sinai. His

isolated testimony seems to imply that few other Latins made the journey accomplished by Georgian or Byzantine monks.[36] Economic considerations were an important impediment to Latin pilgrimage to Sinai in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The trip could not be included within the common pilgrimage timetable of one month, the maximum period between the arrival of Western ships in Acre and their departure in the spring and in the autumn.[37] As a result, the costly journey to the monastery entailed additional expenses for a prolonged stay in the Holy Land or in Egypt until the following trans-Mediterranean sailing season. Latins who had settled in the Frankish states of the Levant or in Cyprus, which was under Latin rule from 1191 on, did not encounter these problems. Nevertheless, Philip of Nablus, mentioned earlier, is the only known Latin settler to have visited Sinai. It would seem, therefore, that the numerous icons preserved in the Sinai monastery displaying "Western" features or donors were not brought there by Latin pilgrims and settlers but rather were sent to the monastery from Acre by people unwilling or unable to undertake the journey.

Twelfth- and thirteenth-century Orthodox pilgrimage to the Holy Land was more important than commonly assumed, though it was conducted on a much smaller scale than was Latin pilgrimage.[38] The evidence regarding the Sinai monastery is meager. The Greek John Phokas, on pilgrimage in 1177, refers only to the Sinai desert and does not even mention the monastery.[39] The youngest son of King Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, Sava, who from 1219 was the first primate of Serbia's autonomous Church, conducted his second pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1234–35. In order to visit Sinai he traveled from Jerusalem to Egypt, where Sultan al-Kamil granted him the requested permit and provided a guide who escorted him to the monastery.[40] This princely visit does not warrant any broader conclusions about Orthodox pilgrimage. An anonymous Byzantine pilgrim guide of 1253/54 offers more convincing evidence in that respect. It traces a journey from Egypt through Raithou on the Gulf of Suez to the monastery, with return to Egypt.[41] It is possible that after the establishment of Egyptian rule over Jerusalem and Sinai in 1187, Orthodox pilgrims preferred to obtain permits in Egypt, rather than travel to the holy sites via Frankish Acre. An inscription close to the monastery and another on the wooden door of its church attest to Armenian pilgrimage in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[42] The Egyptian taxation treatise compiled by al-Makhzumi around 1170 mentions an exit tax of one dinar imposed on each indigenous Christian leaving Egypt for pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[43] It is likely that most Coptic pilgrims traveled overland, yet it is unclear whether any of them visited the Sinai monastery.

Latin pilgrimage to the Levant was abruptly interrupted by the fall of the Frankish states to the Muslims and the destruction of Acre in 1291 yet resumed about a decade later on a much reduced scale.[44] In contrast, the flow of pilgrims to Sinai became far more important than in the previous two centuries, and its nature underwent drastic changes.

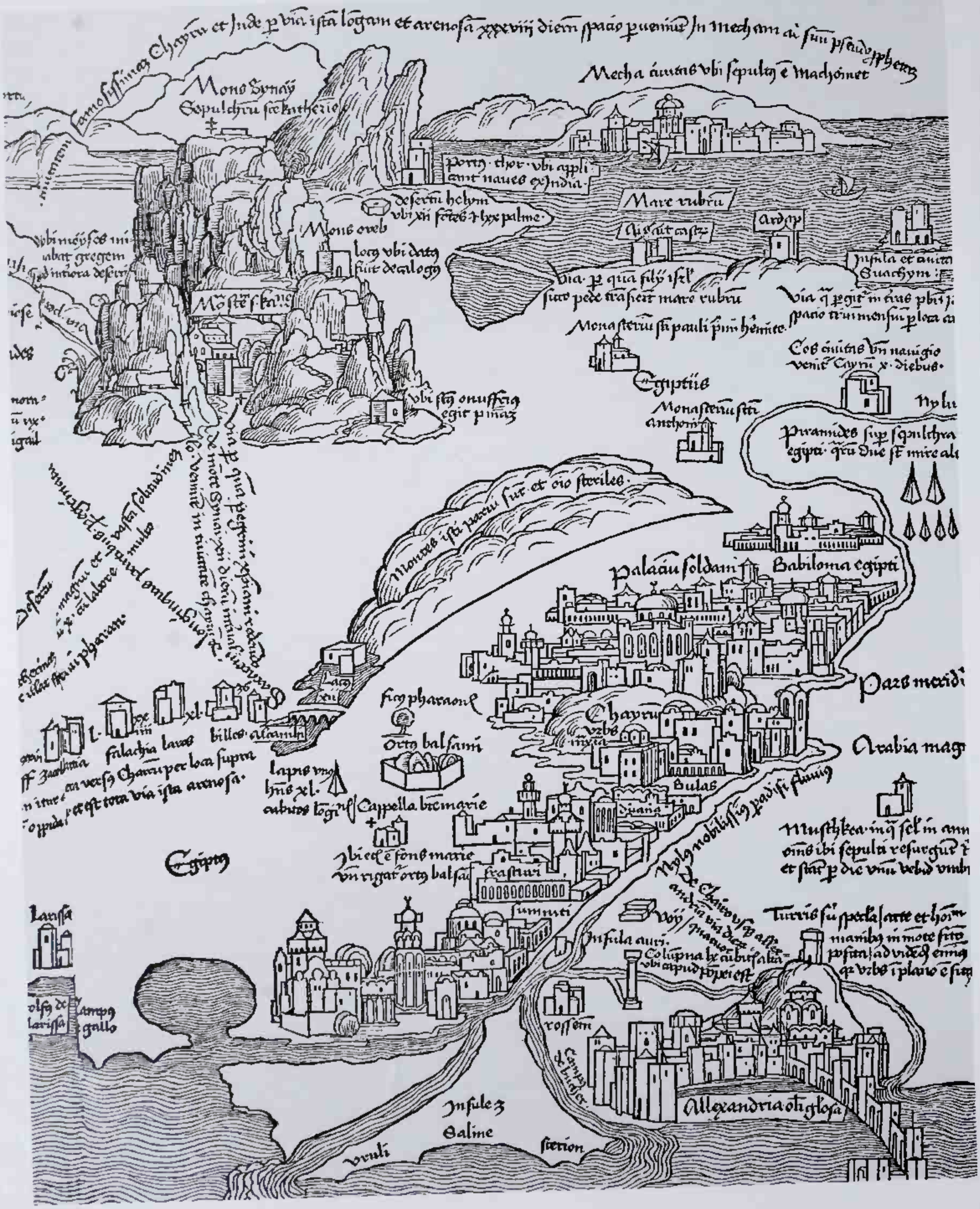
By the fourteenth century pilgrims were expecting spiritual reward for their visits to holy sites, each of which was assigned a specific value for the remission of temporal sins. It was believed that pilgrims could transfer indulgences to individuals not undertaking the journey.[45] The Sinai monastery was included among the sites benefiting from special status in 1328, when Pope John XXII granted a one-year indulgence for visits to "the church of Saint Catherine's monastery in Mount Sinai." The pope's declaration clearly came in response to strong pressure from pilgrims, which accounts for his use of the already common popular designation of the monastery, in contrast to the official reference to the Virgin in papal letters.[46] An anonymous guidebook from around 1350 provides the earliest listing of indulgences for holy sites in the Levant, including the church of Saint Catherine and Mount Sinai. Additional sites in

the vicinity appear in later lists, at times with differing values.[47] By that time Saint Catherine was associated in the West with the holiest sites of Christendom. In 1352 a hosier of London bequeathed twenty pounds to any pilgrim going to Jerusalem and Saint Catherine.[48] Ogier VIII, lord of Anglure, stated that the object of his pilgrimage in 1395–96 was to visit Jerusalem, Saint Catherine, and the early hermitages of Saint Anthony and Saint Paul in the Egyptian desert.[49]

Accounts of pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Sinai became more numerous during the first half of the fourteenth century, and one or several of them have survived from almost every year of the fifteenth century.[50] Pilgrims included information culled from earlier guidebooks and lists of indulgences,[51] even if they did not personally visit the sites they mentioned. Franceschino of Pontremoli, pilgrim in 1383, listed the holy sites of Sinai and Egypt, yet from his travel and expense records it is clear that he did not visit any of them.[52] Many authors listed places, routes, distances, coins, prices, and expenses—item per item—and recorded personal experiences for the benefit of future pilgrims, yet also as testimony to the accomplishment of their pilgrimage.[53] Giovanni, son of the merchant Anselmo Adorno, in 1470 and the Dominican friar Felix Faber in the 1480s were particularly keen observers who took abundant notes day by day.[54] Bernhard von Breydenbach, pilgrim in 1483, planned ahead a printing of his travel account and hired the Utrecht painter Erhard Reuwich to accompany him as "visual recorder" of the journey. The account first appeared in Latin in 1486 and saw twelve editions until 1522. It was almost immediately translated into German, Dutch, French, and Spanish. The numerous woodcuts in the book, one of them including Sinai (fig. 72), were among the latter's main attractions. Printing opened a new era in the diffusion of pilgrimage accounts, and Reuwich's illustrations were extremely influential in later depictions of Sinai.[55]

The destruction of Acre in 1291 generated an important shift in pilgrimage itineraries to the holy sites of the Levant. Venice as transit station and Venetian ships fulfilled a decisive role in the transportation of pilgrims, who disembarked in Jaffa or in Alexandria (fig. 73).[56] In Venice in 1384 Lionardo Frescobaldi met Venetians and Frenchmen who boarded galleys transporting pilgrims to Jaffa in order to proceed to the Holy Sepulcher, whereas the group of fourteen Florentines to which Frescobaldi belonged sailed on a cog to Alexandria. Only his party intended to reach Sinai.[57] The important role of the Cypriot port of Famagusta as relay station accounts for the presumed intervention of King Peter I of Cyprus on behalf of the pilgrims. The treaty of 1370 between Cyprus and Egypt, which is missing, apparently contained a clause ensuring that Latins visiting the Holy Sepulcher and Saint Catherine would not pay higher taxes than before 1365.[58] The specific reference to the monastery is significant.

The continuous flow of pilgrims through Egypt had earlier induced the Egyptian jurist al-Subki, who died in 1335, to define Latin pilgrims as a special category of non-Muslims, different from that of Latin merchants.[59] Under the restrictive system imposed on Latin foreigners in Alexandria, the pilgrims were compelled to reside in *funduq*s, or compounds, assigned to Latin merchants. They lodged successively in the *funduq*s of Marseilles, the Catalans, the French, and Narbonne, and again the Catalans, as attested respectively in 1323, 1381, 1384, 1395, and 1483.[60] The passage through Alexandria enabled the pilgrims to see the two columns between which Saint Catherine had been martyred, the nearby prison in which she had been kept, and the place from which the angels had carried her body to Sinai. However, not all Latin pilgrims passing through Egypt visited Sinai. Those undertaking the journey traveled to Cairo, where the residing representative of the Sinai monastery gave them useful advice about the journey. In 1470 a Greek monk from Sinai—who spoke Italian and was from



Mons Synay
Mons oreb
Mare rubru
Ardep
Egiptus
Palaciu soldani
Babilonia egipti
Chayru
Pars meridi
Arabia mag
Egiptus
Larissa
Insula auri
Allexandria

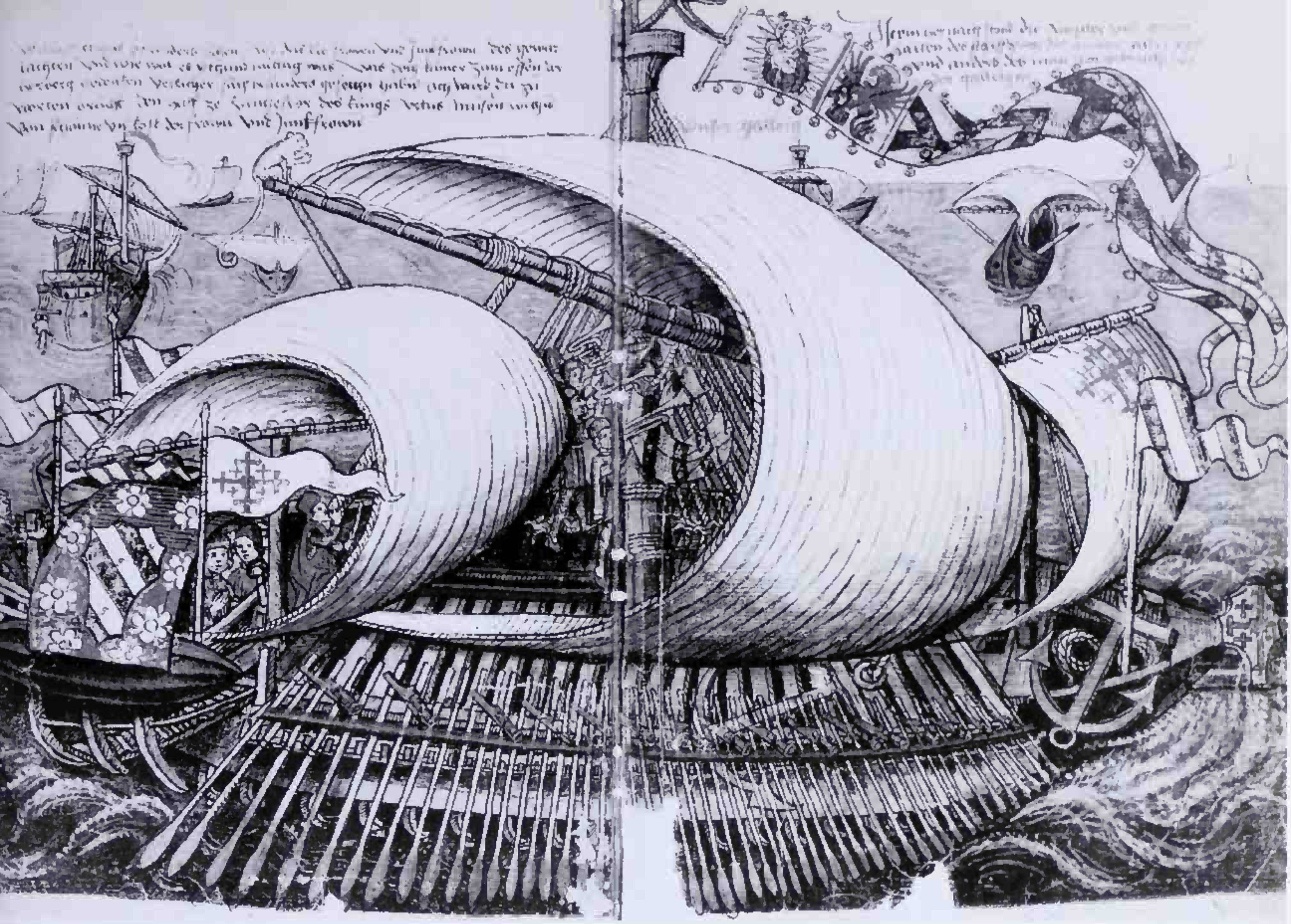


Figure 72 (opposite)
Erhard Reuwich, *The Holy Land*. Woodcut. In Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Die heyligen reyssen gen Jherusalem*, the author's pilgrimage account of 1483, first printed in Mainz, 1486. The upper left section shows the monastery and the holy sites around it; the upper right section shows the Red Sea and holy sites in southern Egypt

Figure 73 (above)
La Contarina, illustration showing a Venetian ship transporting pilgrims in the last decades of the fifteenth century. In the Ms. of Gruenemberg, late fifteenth century. Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe, Germany (St. Peter, Pap. 32).

Candia, the capital of Venetian Crete—served as guide to Anselmo Adorno and his party from Cairo to the monastery.[61] The pilgrims coming from Egypt traveled mainly through Raithou, along one of the routes of western Sinai common in the Byzantine period.

Western pilgrims leaving Jerusalem for Sinai proceeded through Bethlehem and Hebron to Gaza, where they were sometimes allowed to take a hot bath in common with Muslims.[62] In the fifteenth century there seem to have been regular departures from Jerusalem. Pero Tafur, pilgrim in 1435, failed to join the caravan leaving for Saint Catherine and, therefore, proceeded through Egypt.[63] Felix Faber missed the departure of 1480 and, therefore, decided to include the journey in his second pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1483. He then met a Muslim who spoke Italian and faulty German, learned from pilgrims whom he often led to Saint Catherine.[64]

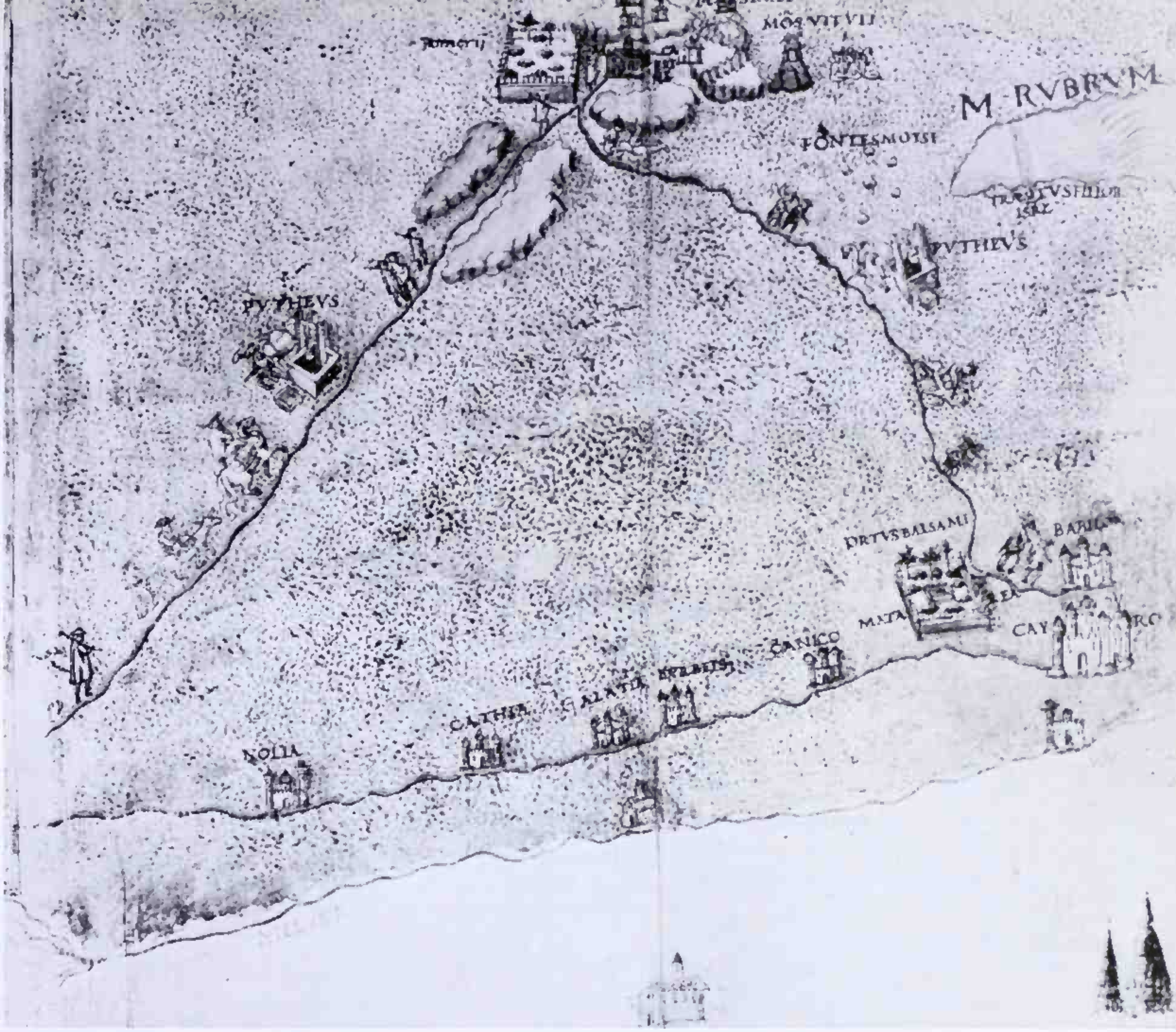
The pilgrims traveling to Sinai were of mixed origin yet generally preferred to travel with fellow countrymen or people speaking their language. However, in 1346 Niccolò da Poggibonsi left Cairo in a group comprising two Englishmen, one Syrian or Oriental Christian, and three Greeks from Constantinople. Later, on his way to Gaza, he encountered a group of Frenchmen who were traveling to Saint Catherine.[65] In 1384 the party of fourteen Tuscans, including Lionardo Frescobaldi, met—at the monastery—high-ranking pilgrims from Germany, Flanders, England, France, and Gascony.[66] On his return voyage in 1394 Niccolò di Martoni left Rhodes with French noblemen who had visited Sinai.[67] On his first

pilgrimage in 1480 Felix Faber met two Englishmen who intended to reach Saint Catherine, yet he could not converse with them since they spoke neither German nor Latin.[68]

The fourteenth- and fifteenth-century accounts provide detailed evidence about the difficulties encountered along the way, especially the nature of arid and rugged terrain, the heat, the lack or scarcity of good drinking water, and the fierce sandstorms. In 1394 Niccolò di Martoni and other pilgrims bought lemon and other syrups in Cairo, as recommended before departure, in order to mix them with poor-quality water. He ascribed the death of five young pilgrims in his group to their lack of syrups.[69] Cautious pilgrims prepared spectacles attached to cloth or leather to protect their eyes during sandstorms.[70] The journey was fraught with dangers because of occasional attacks by Bedouins, who sometimes could be kept at bay with bribes. The pilgrims also describe the wretched conditions of Arab nomads they met and strange animals they had never seen before. In 1470, between the Gulf of Suez and the monastery, Adorno noted inscriptions in Latin characters carved on rocks by earlier pilgrims.[71]

The pilgrims resided from five to seven days in the monastery. Some of them offered detailed descriptions of its structures, the monks, their way of life and rituals, the location and nature of Saint Catherine's relics, the practices surrounding them, and the holy sites in the vicinity (fig. 74). Incidentally, for the ascent of the holy mountains the monks leased to the pilgrims canes supposedly made of the same wood as Moses' rod, as reported by a pilgrim of 1486.[72] There are numerous discrepancies between the accounts with respect to the number of monks, which appears to have seriously dwindled in the second half of the fifteenth century. Ludolph of Sudheim, pilgrim between 1336 and 1341, is the only fourteenth- or fifteenth-century pilgrim to mention the presence of Ethiopian, Coptic, and Syrian monks in the monastery, in addition to Greeks.[73] The absence of Latin monks is noteworthy. Giacomo da Verona, pilgrim in 1335, noted twelve columns and three hundred lamps in the church, and many well-adorned chapels with numerous painted panels and small icons, crosses, and lamps. He was fortunate to touch Saint Catherine's skull and receive in small glass vials the oil it exuded.[74] A Latin copy of his account, executed in 1420, includes a drawing of the holy sites of Sinai (fig. 75).[75] In 1346 Niccolò da Poggibonsi expressed the emotional release of his party at the sight of Saint Catherine's body, after the arduous journey through the desert. He failed in his attempt to count all the lamps, many of gold and silver, yet the monks told him there were more than fifteen hundred of them.[76] Niccolò di Martoni, pilgrim in 1394, was deeply impressed by the marble, the figured mosaics, and the large number of beautiful icons in Saint Catherine's church. He had never seen so many burning lamps in a place of worship.[77]

In the second half of the fifteenth century the Saint Catherine monks sought to take advantage of the regular flow of Latin pilgrims, which yielded income in kind and in cash. By 1470 they had set aside a small rectangular room for the celebration of Latin Mass and two very small adjoining rooms for the accommodation of Latin pilgrims.[78] The Latin groups were obviously small. As in the fourteenth century, there is no evidence of Latin monks in residence. After sighting Saint Catherine's relics and obtaining the oil in glass vials, each group of pilgrims affixed poems or prayers composed in the saint's honor to her tomb or to the wall of a hall in which they stayed.[79] The pilgrims believed that devotional objects, rings, jewels, and silk touching Saint Catherine's relics acquired healing or other miracle-working properties.[80] In the fourteenth and especially the fifteenth century some pilgrims from France, Germany, England, and the Low Countries incised their names on the walls of a large hall situated



behind Justinian's basilica. A number of noblemen added their coat of arms and emblems. Several pilgrims who recorded their names are also known from the accounts of their respective journeys.[81]

The evidence regarding Orthodox pilgrimage to Sinai in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is sparse. We have already noted three Greeks from Constantinople traveling in 1346. A text added to an anonymous Russian description of Constantinople, the latter based on a Greek text of 1389–91, relates that the Byzantine emperor spent two years in disguise in the Holy Land, went to Mount Sinai, where he remained for one month, and proceeded to Egypt.[82] The reference to the emperor appears to reflect Byzantine pilgrimage via Jerusalem to Sinai around that time. It recalls an apocryphal story about the emperor in disguise visiting the Holy Sepulcher, recorded in the eleventh century.[83] A Greek inscription dated 1461 found at Eṭ-Ṭur, to the north of Raithou on the Gulf of Suez, was left by an Orthodox pilgrim coming from Egypt on his way to the Sinai monastery.[84] The same itinerary was followed by the metropolitan (Orthodox archbishop) of Ephesos, Daniel, who in 1480/81 carried out an

Figure 74
Pilgrimage to Mount Sinai. In Ms. of Gabriele Capodilista, pilgrim in 1458. Private collection.

inspection tour of the patriarchates of Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch on behalf of the patriarch of Constantinople, Maximos III Christonymos. He traveled from Egypt through Raithou to the monastery of Saint Catherine and then to Gaza.[85] A guide compiled between 1475 and 1481 by a Greek apparently from Constantinople contains two unconnected itineraries, one leading from Jaffa to sites in the Holy Land as far as the Jordan, while the other begins in the Egyptian port of Damietta and covers Egypt and Sinai with passage through Raithou.[86] The second itinerary appears to follow in abbreviated form the account of Metropolitan Daniel, even in details such as the comparison between Cairo and Constantinople, and is possibly based on the earlier account. The *Anonymus Allatii*, ascribed to the mid-fifteenth century, contains descriptions of Mount Sinai and Raithou, yet without indication of itinerary.[87]

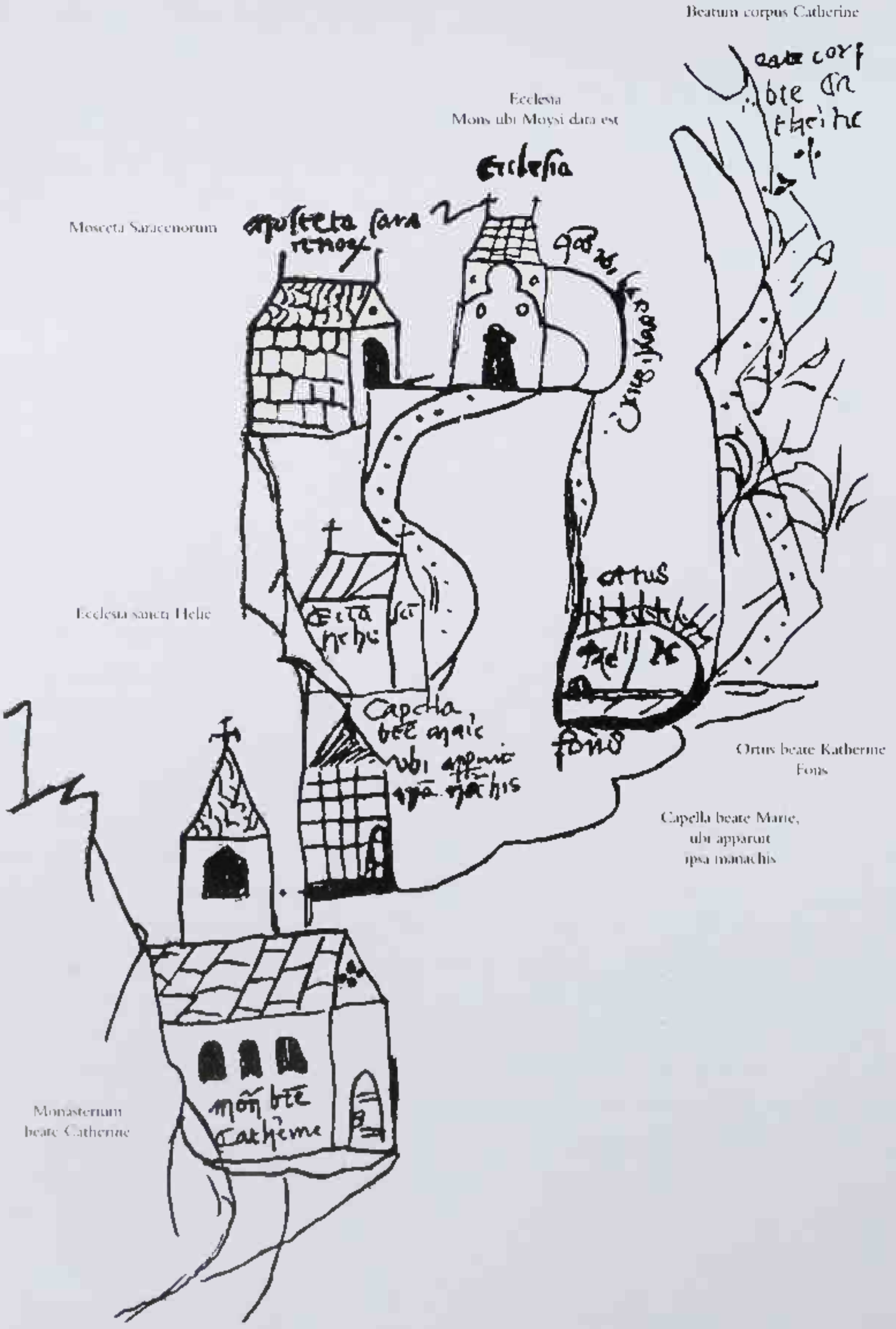


Figure 75
Sinai monastery and the holy sites nearby. Drawing. In *Liber peregrinationis Fratri Jacobi de Verona (pilgrimage of 1335).* 1420 copy.

Georgian inscriptions dated to the fourteenth century have been found in Wadi Haggag.[88] They reveal that some pilgrims still reached the Sinai monastery via Aila, as in the Byzantine period. However, a fifteenth-century inscription found in a monastic cell at Eṭ-Ṭur may imply Armenian pilgrimage through Egypt.[89] In 1463 four Armenians left their names on the peak of Mount Sinai. Two of them later became Armenian patriarchs of Jerusalem.[90] It is unclear whether in that period they or their fellow countrymen were also visiting the monastery, whose monks were strongly opposed to the anti-Chalcedonian Armenians and Jacobites, as attested by Felix Faber in the 1480s.[91] In 1441 or 1442 the Florentine Marco di Bartolommeo Rustici met on Mount Sinai an Ethiopian monk, whom he met again in Florence.[92] This encounter suggests Ethiopian pilgrimage around that time.

Russian pilgrimage to Sinai is attested in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The pilgrim guide of the archimandrite Grefenij, compiled around 1370, mentions that the journey from Cairo and from Gaza to Mount Sinai lasted fifteen days and adds that "the orthodox Christians go till there." He traveled from Smolensk and apparently consulted earlier works.[93] In 1461–62, on his second pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the monk Varsonofij from northwestern Russia traveled via Cairo to Saint Catherine's monastery, where he stayed for six days, and returned to Egypt via Raithou. He is the first Russian pilgrim to provide a detailed description of the monastery, the traditions about Moses and Saint Catherine, and the mountains associated with them.[94] Yet Zosima, on pilgrimage in the Holy Land in 1419/20, failed to visit Sinai.[95] The merchant Vasilij traveled from Egypt to Jerusalem in 1465/66 without passing through Saint Catherine.[96] The Pseudo Ignatij pilgrim guidebook, ascribed to 1475–87, mentions only the distance from Jerusalem to Mount Sinai.[97] It has been suggested that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the practical autocephalous status of the Russian Church from 1459 onward strengthened Russian pilgrimage to the Holy Land.[98] The few sources documenting Russian pilgrimage do not warrant such conclusion.

The present short study, which is far from exhaustive, reveals the existence of large chronological gaps in the evidence bearing on Christian pilgrimage to Sinai. Moreover, the various Christian communities are unevenly represented in the sources. These sources offer at best glimpses and a biased view of the flow of pilgrimage to Sinai; nevertheless, they underline the distinctive features of that movement.

Except for monks, especially those residing in neighboring countries, Sinai was never the only or main destination of pilgrimage to biblical sites. The Sinai journey was always linked to visits to the Holy Land but differed from them in several ways. It remained of secondary importance, never became a mass movement, and was reserved exclusively for men from the late sixth century onward, since women appear to have been barred from access to the Sinai monastery.[99] The arduous and perilous Sinai pilgrimage conferred particular prestige on those undertaking it yet could never compete with the visit of holy sites connected with Christ.

There were wide fluctuations in the number of pilgrims visiting Sinai over the centuries. These were overwhelmingly Oriental Christians in the period preceding and following the Arab conquest. Literary sources document some large groups. Since most Sinai inscriptions either are undatable or can only be dated within a range of one or more centuries, they do not enable an estimate of the flow of pilgrims at any given time. Nor do the numbers of inscriptions in the various languages allow any assessment of the relative numbers of their respective speakers among the pilgrims. Furthermore, the Greek inscriptions do not permit any conclusion regarding the origin of their authors, in contrast to the Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopian, or Coptic inscriptions.[100]

Figure 76
Pol, Jean, and Herman de Limbourg (Franco-Netherlandish, act. 1399–1416). *The Body of Saint Catherine Carried by Angels to Sinai.* In *The Belles Heures of Jean, duc de Berry,* 1405–8/9, fol. 20r. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Cloisters Collection (54.1.1).

The Sinai pilgrimage appears to have been limited and sporadic after the Arab conquest and remained so despite the supposed presence of Saint Catherine's relics in the monastery by the 1150s at the latest and the sanction of the saint's cult in 1214. Only in the first half of the fourteenth century did that pilgrimage grow into a regular feature. It then became an overwhelmingly Western movement, involving both clerics and affluent laymen, or those supported by the latter. This movement was stimulated by the conjunction of several factors. Pilgrimage to Sinai as penance, recorded only once, in the ninth century (as discussed earlier), was a major incentive to the journey. The cult of Saint Catherine in the West assumed considerable importance, and her relics were the focus of Latin pilgrimage to Sinai (fig. 76). Finally, devotion and spiritual experience on the road to salvation were coupled with curiosity for the exotic and a quest for adventure. These factors seem to have been largely absent from pilgrimage by the members of Oriental churches in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

NOTES

1. Maraval 2002.
2. Dahari 2000, esp. pp. 21–24, 164–68.
3. Franceschini and Weber 1965, chaps. 1–6, pp. 37–46; for the prayer, see Franceschini and Weber 1965, chap. 1, p. 37.
4. Dahari 2000, pp. 54–63; J. Grossmann 2004.
5. On that decline, see note 2.
6. N. P. Ševčenko 2006. My sincere thanks to Nancy Ševčenko for kindly sharing her paper with me before its publication.
7. Stone 1982, pp. 132–33.
8. This may have been the case of a Latin psalter brought from Jerusalem, which the monk Gorasma granted to the monastery in 1230. His gift is recorded in Arabic, indicating that he was an Oriental Christian; Altbauer 1978, pp. vi–ix.
9. On Sinai monks in these cities, read further in this essay. Note also the monastery's monks bringing gifts in gold and silver from Rouen in Normandy in the first half of the eleventh century; France 1989, pp. 36–37.
10. As suggested recently by Folda 2003, p. 124, with respect to a cabinet for the cathedral of Halberstadt.
11. Reconstruction of the routes in Dahari 2000, pp. 9–15, with indication of terrain, water resources, and daily stages.
12. Puech 1980.
13. Stone 1982, pp. 30, 32; Alishan 1884, p. 398: Anastasios of Armenia mentions an Armenian monastery *on* Mount Sinai. It is not clear whether he is referring to the monastery at the foot of the mountain.
14. Stone 1982, pp. 32, 34–36; also Stone 1986, pp. 97, 105–10.
15. Stone 1982, pp. 49, 51–52.
16. Van Esbroeck 1982, pp. 173–74, 176–79; Schrade 2001, p. 173.
17. McCormick 2001, pp. 245–47.
18. On the tags, see, respectively, Galland 2004, p. 122, no. 78, and McCormick 2001, pp. 302–3, 306, 311, 313; on Frotmundus, see Hiestand 1993, pp. 88–89.
19. Jacoby 2005.
20. Note that Rodulfus Glaber does not refer to pilgrims visiting Sinai; see note 9.
21. Hill 1962, p. 100, par. 4.
22. Jacoby 1986, pp. 27–31; Jacoby 2002; Jacoby 2004, pp. 99–102.
23. Huygens 1994, pp. 72–73, 101, 178, respectively. Dating of their journeys by Pryor 1994, p. 51, and by Huygens 1994, p. 28. On borrowings, see Huygens 1994, pp. 18–19.
24. Vogüé 1860, pp. 417–18.
25. Boeren 1980, p. 13, and, on dating of Ms. D, p. 2.
26. Mayer 1990, pp. 52–54, 61–62, 139–40, 208–15, 221–22. Philip's visit is referred to later in this essay.
27. Hiestand 1993, p. 92, esp. n. 59.
28. N. P. Ševčenko 2006 (see note 6).
29. Laurent 1857, pp. 41–45.
30. See Tăutu 1950, pp. 35–37, no. 17.
31. Tafel and G. M. Thomas 1856–57, vol. 2, pp. 146–50; Tăutu 1950, pp. 35–37, no. 17. The privilege of Pope Honorius III was confirmed by several of his successors: Coureas 1996.
32. Weitzmann 1974, pp. 52–53.
33. Moranvillé 1905, p. 22, and, on dating between 1410 and 1425, pp. 71–72.
34. In 1517 Pope Leo X was the first to write to the "monastery of St. Catherine of Mount Sinai"; Hofmann 1927, p. 270.
35. Laurent 1857, p. 20. The other version appears in a fifteenth-century manuscript, for which see Laurent 1857, p. 64, and its dating, p. 58.
36. Thietmar continuously used the first person in his account, yet was not alone on that pilgrimage since he refers to one of his companions: Laurent 1857, p. 36.
37. Jacoby 2002, pp. 29, 36.
38. Jacoby 2004, pp. 104–6.
39. Troickij 1889, p. xxiii, par. 25; wrong dating by Wilkinson in a note on Phokas in the volume of translations by Troickij (1889, p. 22).
40. Obolensky 1988, pp. 167–68.
41. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1895, pp. 9–10, pars. 29–30; trans. in Külzer 1994, p. 311; on dating, Külzer 1994, p. 41.
42. Stone 1982, pp. 91 and 89, respectively.
43. Cahen 1964, p. 297, and, for dating, pp. 218–22. There was no reason for Latin pilgrims to pass through Egypt at that time.
44. Jacoby 1986, pp. 31–40, on Western pilgrimage and maritime transportation after 1291.
45. As implied in 1384 by Frescobaldi; Bartolini 1991, p. 125.
46. Hofmann 1927, pp. 258–59, and note 34 above.
47. Friedman 1983, pp. 286–91, 308–9, 320.
48. Trans. in Webb 1999, p. 140. In her will of 1410 Queen Margaret of Denmark allotted money for six men to be sent "to Jerusalem, Bethlehem and to the holy places thereabouts and to St. Katherine's": Webb 1999, p. 141.
49. Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, p. 1, par. 1.
50. Incomplete list of dated and undated accounts and guides in Atiya 1938, pp. 490–509.
51. Hassler 1843–49, vol. 1, pp. 2–3, and vol. 2, p. 492.
52. Friedman 1983, pp. 308–9 and 300–302, lines 39–70, respectively.
53. Expense account for Sinai in Moranvillé 1905, pp. 84–86.
54. Giovanni Adorno ran out of paper while in the monastery and obtained some from the monks (see Heers and Groër 1978, p. 474); Faber's account is the most elaborate and important one of fifteenth-century pilgrimage (see Hassler 1843–49).
55. Giersch and Schmid 2004, pp. 142–67; Weiss 1988, pp. 119–20.
56. See note 44.
57. Bartolini 1991, pp. 124–25, 127, 129.
58. Mas Latrie 1852–61, vol. 2, p. 348.
59. Constable 2003, p. 115.
60. I shall address this topic in another study.
61. Heers and Groër 1978, pp. 210, 230, 236, 238, 242, 474. Provisions for the monastery were brought from Cairo and Gaza once a year: Heers and Groër 1978, p. 230.
62. Hassler 1843–49, vol. 2, p. 368.
63. Jimenez de La Espada 1874, pp. 65, 77–94.
64. Hassler 1843–49, vol. 1, pp. 61, 198.
65. Bacchi della Lega 1945, pp. 115, 136.
66. Gargiolli 1862, pp. 326–27.
67. Le Grand 1895, p. 643.
68. Hassler 1843–49, vol. 1, pp. 41–42.
69. Le Grand 1895, p. 605. Syrups are also mentioned by Adorno; see Heers and Groër 1978, p. 212.
70. Moranvillé 1905, p. 87.
71. Heers and Groër 1978, p. 222.
72. Hiestand 1993, p. 79 n. 10.
73. Neumann 1884, p. 346. In another version of the text the Ethiopians are replaced by Georgians: Deycks 1851, p. 65. On the identification of "Indi" with Ethiopians, see Cerulli 1943, pp. 147–49.
74. Röhricht 1895, pp. 229–30, and, on dating, pp. 155–56.
75. On dating, see Röhricht 1895, pp. 160–61.
76. Bacchi della Lega 1945, pp. 123, 126.
77. Le Grand 1895, pp. 606–10.
78. Heers and Groër 1978, pp. 228–30; Hassler 1843–49, vol. 2, p. 500.
79. Heers and Groër 1978, pp. 244–46; Hassler 1843–49, vol. 2, pp. 500–501.
80. Bartolini 1991, p. 155; Heers and Groër 1978, p. 226.
81. Van de Walle 1964, pp. 119–32.
82. The addition, which cannot be dated, appears in a seventeenth-century copy of the Russian version: Majeska 1984, p. 152 n. 102, and, on the guide, pp. 115–26, esp. pp. 121–22.
83. Jacoby 2005, pp. 273–74.
84. Stone 1992–94, vol. 1, p. 82, no. 904.
85. Destunis 1884, pp. 1–4; translation of the section on Sinai in Külzer 1994, pp. 340–42; on dating, Külzer 1994, pp. 28–29.
86. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1903, pp. 1–13 and 13–16, respectively; translation of the second itinerary in Külzer 1994, pp. 335–37; on dating, Külzer 1994, pp. 45–46.
87. *PG*, vol. 133, col. 983, chap. 9; Külzer 1994, pp. 42–44.
88. Van Esbroeck 1982, pp. 174–175, 177.
89. Stone 1985–86.
90. Stone 1982, pp. 67–68.
91. Hassler 1843–49, vol. 2, p. 503.
92. Cardini 2002, p. 256.
93. Seemann 1976, pp. 198–203. Reference to Mount Sinai appears in the Leonid edition: Khitrowo 1889, p. 168.
94. Seemann 1976, pp. 261, 264–66.
95. Seemann 1976, pp. 250–59.
96. Seemann 1976, pp. 267–70.
97. Seemann 1976, pp. 276–77.
98. Seemann 1976, p. 271.
99. The Roman noblewoman Rusticiana is the last recorded female pilgrim to Mount Sinai, mentioned in August 594: Ewald and Hartmann 1957, p. 279; however, Pope Gregory I failed to refer to the monastery in the letter he sent her.
100. Many Coptic inscriptions have been found in western Sinai, yet they cannot be dated: see, for instance, Stone 1992–94, vol. 1, p. 50, no. 3567, and p. 126, no. 4638.

Visual Piety and Institutional Identity at Sinai

Kristen M. Collins

Within the church is a kind of porch five feet in width: and there is another big door, which does not open. Above this door St. Mary with her Son in her arms is represented in mosaic: on the one hand stands that precious St. Catherine, and on the other Moses, and in front of these figures, this is above the door, burn always three silver lamps. NICCOLÒ DA POGGIBONSI[1]

Around the year 1349 the Franciscan friar Niccolò da Poggibonsi, as a part of his itinerary through the Holy Land, arrived at the monastery of Saint Catherine.[2] His account not only provides one of the few pilgrims' descriptions of the interior of the church but also documents the convergence of the three great personages of the monastery above the symbolic entrance to this holy space. No trace of a mosaic remains in this location today. Whether the friar's description refers to a lost mosaic or perhaps a group of icons hung together,[3] his account records a moment in the evolving hagiography of the site—the linking of Moses, Mary, and Catherine through works of art.

IDENTITY OF THE MONASTERY

The institution now known as the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, more properly the Sacred and Imperial Monastery of the God-Trodden Mount Sinai, was for centuries associated with the figures of Moses and the Theotokos, or Mother of God.[4] Located at the foot of Mount Sinai, one of the great *loca sancta* (sacred places) of the Holy Land, the monastery was built on the site of the Burning Bush, out of which, according to the biblical account, God spoke to Moses (EXOD. 3:2–22, 4:1–17).

Figure 77 (opposite) Jeremiah Palladas (Cretan, seventeenth century), Saint Catherine of Alexandria, seventeenth century. Tempera and gold on panel. Iconostasis, main church, The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Bruce White.

When the Spanish pilgrim Egeria traveled to Sinai in the fourth century, she described a community of monastic cells scattered throughout the mountains and a church located at the base of the mountain.[5] At the time of Egeria's account, the bush grew in a garden in front of the church and marked one of the primary points on the pilgrims' circuit of this holy site; the other major destinations included the church on the mountaintop where Moses is believed to have retreated in prayer for forty days and the cave where the prophet Elijah is said to have

sought shelter. Only after the relics of the martyr-saint Catherine of Alexandria were brought to the monastery in the eleventh or twelfth century did the monastery take its present name. The earliest references to the monastery of Saint Catherine are found in the fourteenth-century accounts of Latin pilgrims, such as Sir John Mandeville and Niccolò da Poggibonsi, who refer not only to the monastery but also to the church as Saint Catherine's.[6]

In the thirteenth century an identity shift becomes apparent in the monastery's art: the place that was once primarily associated with Moses' encounter with the divine becomes identified with the physical presence of Catherine's relics. This change, which is documented in liturgical sources and pilgrims' accounts, also appears in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Sinai imagery that brings together Moses, Mary, and Catherine, particularly in icons of the Virgin and Catherine. Furthermore, the iconography of Mary herself also changes; a new visual type, the Virgin of the Burning Bush, emerges during the same period that Catherine becomes physically present in the art and ritual of the monastery. A closer study of these icons (see later section, "Origins of the Burning Bush Type") reveals the monastery's attitude toward its holy figures and demonstrates how the community presented them to a culturally diverse audience of pilgrims.

The image of the Virgin wrapped in the flames and tendrils of the Burning Bush appeared for the first time in Sinai icons at the same time that the site was increasingly becoming a major international pilgrimage destination associated with Catherine's cult. The Burning Bush imagery that developed at this time articulated the significance of the Theotokos for the monastery in a new and explicit manner. This image type emerged during the period that there was a demonstrated Western presence at the monastery, as well as in the greater Latin Kingdom of the Holy Land. This allows the intriguing hypothesis that this imagery responded to the monastery's increased contact with a Latin audience. An examination of the convergence of the Virgin of the Burning Bush and Saint Catherine in the monastery's icons may provide a clearer picture of the monastery's internal devotional practices and the external interest in the growing cult of Catherine.

In the sixth century historian Procopius wrote that the new church commissioned at this time was dedicated to "the Holy Theotokos."[7] While churches across the Byzantine Empire were commonly dedicated to the Mother of God, at Sinai the particular association of the Virgin with Moses was well established in exegetical writings. In interpreting the scriptures, the church fathers had linked the theophany of Moses—the moment at which God revealed himself in the form of the Burning Bush—with that of Mary, to whom God appeared in the form of the Incarnation. In the fourth century Bishop Gregory of Nyssa introduced the Burning Bush as a metaphor for the virginity of Mary, who was likened to the bush that burned without being consumed.[8] Through the placement of a church dedicated to the Mother of God at the foot of Mount Sinai, the unifying theme of the entire site in its earliest years was one of theophany—the appearance of God to man. Thus the place where God revealed himself to Moses became associated, through the dedication of the church, with the Virgin.

In its earliest years the identity of the monastery was therefore shaped both by its physical location at Mount Sinai and by exegesis. This conscious association with the holy site continued through the thirteenth century, as seen in the *Typikon* of Abbot Symeon. Dating to 1214, this guide for the liturgical observances of the monastery was based on that of the monastery of Saint Sabas in Jerusalem and modified for use by the monks at Sinai. The text's language makes clear that the defining features of the Sinai community remained their associ-

ation with the Mother of God and with the hallowed ground of Mount Sinai: "*Typikon* after the model of the lavra of our saintly father Sabas, of the monastery of Jerusalem, intended (for) and dedicated to the all-sacred and holy monastery of the supremely holy Theotokos, established on the holy mountain Sinai, wherein is also honoured the great God-seeing prophet Moses."[9]

While reinforcing the primary role of the Theotokos for the monastery, this document also provides the earliest record of the introduction of Saint Catherine into the liturgy at Sinai. The *Typikon* establishes November 24 as the feast day for both the holy martyr Catherine of Alexandria and Saint Merkourios. Nancy Ševčenko has noted that the feast of Saint Catherine, as it is articulated in the *Typikon*, is less elaborate than that of Moses and other Sinaitic saints.[10] The document demonstrates Catherine's presence, if not yet her prominence, in the devotional life of the monastery at this time.

MOSES, MARY, AND THE BURNING BUSH

Moses and the Mother of God figured in the artistic tradition of the monastery from the time of the church's construction. The great Justinianic apse mosaic, one of the few early works of art created specifically for the monastery, depicts the moment that Christ's divinity was revealed to the apostles on Mount Tabor. This monumental work reinforces the theme of theophany already introduced through the placement of the church at the base of Mount Sinai and the dedication of the monastery to the Theotokos. Moses appears not only in the narrative Transfiguration image, standing beside Christ as an embodiment of the Law, but also in the mosaics on the wall above the apse (see fig. 15). On the right, Moses, preparing to set foot on holy ground, removes his sandal before the Burning Bush and, on the left, reaches above to receive the tablets of the Law.[11]

While the Virgin is featured in some of the great early works of the monastery, most notably the stunning sixth-century encaustic icon of the Virgin and Christ Enthroned with Angels (see fig. 46),[12] the earliest image to explicitly link Mary and the site of Moses' encounter with the divine is an Ascension icon dating to the ninth or tenth century (see cat. no. 5). Once the central panel of a triptych, this icon gives physical form to the exegetical interpretation of the Burning Bush as a type for the Virgin. In the lower register, below the rising figure of Christ, the Virgin stands among the group of assembled apostles, both hands raised with palms turned outward in the orant position of prayer (fig. 78). The jeweled footstool on which the Virgin stands separates her from the group and lifts her above the first row of figures at her sides. Directly behind her, the Burning Bush—shown here as a leafy green bush with red flowers—frames the Virgin, setting her apart from the composition much like the mandorla that encases the image of Christ above her.[13]

The presence of the red-flowering bush supports the hypothesis that this object was created specifically for placement in the monastery of the Theotokos at the site of the Burning Bush.[14] The landscape of this image conflates two holy sites and, in fact, two holy mountains. The representation of the mountain behind the figures—painted as a series of red scales—can be immediately understood as the Mount of Olives, traditionally held to be the place from which Christ rose to heaven.[15] At the same time, however, the reference to the Burning Bush and the marked emphasis on the Virgin suggest that this image would have had particular resonance for the inhabitants of the monastery located at the base of Mount Sinai.

Weitzmann and others have pointed to this ninth/tenth-century image as a precursor of the Burning Bush type that appears in the thirteenth-century icons at Sinai, an image type in

Figure 78
Ascension of Christ, ninth/tenth century (detail, cat. no. 5).

which the Virgin appears wrapped in the flames of the bush itself.[16] However, the Ascension icon, separated by several centuries from the later images, links metaphor and site in a manner that does not rely on the iconography of the flames. While the Ascension icon deliberately refers to the Burning Bush, its painter was working within an established artistic idiom.

In composition, the Ascension scene follows the iconography present on Palestinian pilgrim ampullae (fig. 80) or the Syriac Rabbula Gospels (see fig. 101), both from the sixth century, in which the apostles surround the central figure of the Virgin while Christ rises to heaven in a mandorla above. In style, this icon resembles works of the Palestinian school. It may have been produced for the monastery by artists who had come to Sinai from Jerusalem; for example, we know that in the tenth century a community of Georgian monks left the monastery of Saint Sabas near Jerusalem to reside at Sinai. The Sinai Ascension icon deviates slightly from the dynamic Ascension iconography seen in these earlier examples, however. In the Sinai icon nearly all the apostles turn, with gestures and gaze, to the central figure of the Virgin rather than to Christ above. In addition, the footstool on which Mary stands is an element not usually seen in exterior scenes and heightens the emphasis on the Virgin.[17]

The artistic language used to express the connection between the Theotokos and the Burning Bush also resembles that of wall paintings found in Coptic monasteries. The artists of

Figure 79
Apse fresco with the Ascension, sixth to eighth century. Chapel XVII. The Monastery of Saint Apollo, Bawit, Egypt.

an Ascension fresco in Bawit, Egypt, for example, made connections to holy sites in much the same way (fig. 79).[18] Despite certain differences in tone—the Bawit fresco is marked by its static, frontal composition with the apostles facing outward—the composition resembles the Sinai icon in its juxtaposition of the Virgin with flowering trees behind her. The Virgin is framed on either side by two olive trees with white blossoms, referring to the Mount of Olives. The similarity of the foliage and the choice of this background element demonstrate that the artist who created the Ascension icon used a common expressive device found in monasteries in Egypt. The Sinai icon thus constitutes an early attempt to adapt the exegetical metaphor—the bush as a foreshadowing of the Virgin—to the holy landscape of Sinai and does so within the framework of an established artistic tradition.

Figure 80
Pewter ampulla with the Ascension, sixth century. Museum of the Cathedral, Monza, Italy (Amp.1).

In the late-twelfth or thirteenth century, an established Marian image type, known as the Virgin Kyriotissa, gained a new association with the Burning Bush at Sinai. Ten icons from a series each show a venerating saint or patriarch standing next to a Virgin Kyriotissa, an iconographic type that has come to be known as the Virgin of the Burning Bush (fig. 81, and see cat. no. 52). The explicit designation of the standing Virgin Kyriotissa as "of the Bush" was made through an inscription on a later Sinai icon in which the Kyriotissa type was clearly labeled as "Mother of God of the [Burning] Bush" (fig. 82).[19] The icon bearing this inscription shows the Virgin Kyriotissa flanked by four Sinai saints. While the ten series

Figure 81
Isaiah and the Virgin, thirteenth century (detail, fig. 132)

icons were labeled with the traditional inscription ("Mētēr Theou") without explicit reference to the bush, the repetition of this image type on the later icon that does contain this inscription strongly suggests the established association, at the monastery, of the Kyriotissa type with the Burning Bush.

Doula Mouriki proposed that this series refers to a specific Kyriotissa icon placed in the Chapel of the Burning Bush.[20] These icons have been traditionally regarded as works of local production, either created as votive offerings to the monastery by pilgrims or as gifts to high-ranking visitors.[21] As has been noted elsewhere in this volume (see cat. no. 52), the fact that the monastery retained so many of these works—all identical in composition and differing only in the choice of accompanying saint—suggests that they were created for the monastery itself, perhaps for the personal devotion of monks in their cells. Strengthening the hypothesis for Sinai viewership, if there were indeed a primary image at Sinai to which these small icons referred, the monks who used them for personal devotion would have no need for inscriptions identifying their association with the Burning Bush.

Figure 82
Virgin of the Burning Bush and Four Saints, 1230–40. Tempera on panel, 38 × 39.5 × 3 cm (15 × 15½ × 1⅛ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

SAINT CATHERINE IN ART AND RITUAL

The introduction of Saint Catherine, the third great figure for Sinai, into the spiritual life of the monastery remains difficult to pinpoint. Artistic evidence prior to the thirteenth century reveals a certain disjunction between the internal devotional practices of the monastery and the external motives for pilgrimage to the site. If the relics of Catherine did indeed constitute an important draw for pilgrims as early as the twelfth century,[22] her central role at the monastery had not yet manifested itself in the icons. The earliest icon of Catherine at the monastery dates to the eleventh or possibly twelfth century, and several of them date to the thirteenth. In these images, however, Catherine does not achieve the primacy that she enjoys in art of the following centuries.

While legend tells that Saint Catherine's bones were deposited on a nearby mountaintop by angels and later discovered by monks, who brought them to the monastery, we still do not know when the translation of the relics actually occurred. Like the image of the Virgin of the Burning Bush, which grew out of literary metaphor, the cult of Catherine at Sinai appears to have followed on the heels of hagiographic writings.[23] According to the earliest account of the saint's life, by Symeon Metaphrastes and dating to 960–64, Catherine was a princess from Alexandria who refused to renounce Christianity and sacrifice to the Roman gods.[24] Called to defend her faith against the emperor Maxentius's philosophers, she soundly defeated them in

Figure 83 (opposite)
Saints Catherine and Marina, eleventh/twelfth century. Tempera and gold on panel, 28 × 22 cm (11 × 8⅝ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Bruce White.

Figure 84
Saints Catherine and Marina, thirteenth century. Tempera and metal leaf on panel, 33 × 25 cm (13 × 9⅞ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Kristen M. Collins.

debate, converting them in the process. Maxentius ordered that the philosophers be put to death on a pyre and that Catherine be executed on a spiked wheel. The wheel burst, miraculously saving her, and the emperor then ordered her beheaded.

The site-specific element of Catherine's story—the placement of her body on a peak near Mount Sinai—is not generally included in narratives of Catherine's life. While present in the Metaphrastian account, this element is absent from other Byzantine liturgical sources. Neither the Menologion of Basil II, written around 1000, nor the earliest Byzantine liturgical record that establishes her feast day reports the removal of her body to Sinai.[25] The frequent inclusion of Catherine in late-tenth-century fresco programs in Cappadocia[26] and in eleventh-century illustrated menologia from Constantinople suggest that from the earliest years, veneration of this saint was widespread rather than site specific.[27]

Modern perceptions of Catherine's status as a major cult figure for the monastery derive in large part from the accounts of Western pilgrims to the Holy Land from the thirteenth through the eighteenth century. Muslims, Melchite Christians, and residents of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem also regarded Sinai as a holy place.[28] The art of the monastery thus reflects not simply the figures associated with or particularly venerated at the site but the mixing of cultures and religious practice that occurred at the foot of this holy mountain.

When the pilgrim Epiphanius traveled to Sinai in 820, he made no mention of Catherine's relics.[29] David Jacoby suggests that the cult was in place at the monastery as early as the 1160s,[30] but it is not until 1217, with the account of the German pilgrim Thietmar that a detailed description emerges of her relics at the monastery and the rituals surrounding them:

> When the bishop of the place understood my desire and the cause of my coming, having prepared with devotion and prayers and singing, he went with lighted candles and thuribles to the sarcophagus of the blessed Katherine the virgin, and opened it and commanded me to look within. And I clearly saw the body of the blessed Katherine face to face without shadow, and I kissed her uncovered head. Her limbs and bones adhering together are floating in oil, since the oil itself sweats forth from each joint of her body, not from the tomb; just as from a human body in a bath, sweat breaks forth from the pores in drops.[31]

In the earliest representations at the monastery, Catherine appears in several instances on small icons in the company of other standing saints. A compact icon of Saints Catherine and Marina shows Catherine garbed in Byzantine imperial garments and standing next to maphorion-clad Marina (fig. 83).[32] Her jeweled crown with *prependoulia* and the *thorakion*, a shieldlike element of the *loros* (sash) worn by Byzantine empresses, had become standard attributes for Catherine as early as the eleventh century elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire. This object may have been created specifically for the monastery. Their pairing may have been inspired by the combination of like types: female martyr-saints killed for their refusal to renounce Christianity.[33] While the monastery is not known to have possessed relics of Marina, one of the side chapels in the church was dedicated to her. This grouping could indicate Catherine's own rising status at the site.

A thirteenth-century icon of the same figures (fig. 84) demonstrates the popularity of Marina and Catherine as a pair in the art of the monastery and supports the idea that their association came about as a response to the particular significance of these saints for Sinai. This icon, whose figures were erroneously reinscribed at a later date as Saint Euphemia and Saint Marina, shows the two saints standing side by side.[34] Oddities of Catherine's iconography here

have been attributed to a Western artist's unfamiliarity with Byzantine imagery; she holds an orb inscribed with a cross, a symbol appropriate only for a reigning Byzantine empress, and wears the *loros*, hanging straight down in the manner usually reserved for representations of a male ruler.[35] The orb does in fact appear in other Byzantine images of the saint, however, and the simple *loros* (seen also in the small images of Catherine framing the thirteenth-century vita icon) could as easily have resulted from the work's status as a local production.[36] The small size of the icon made it appropriate for private veneration, perhaps in a chapel, while repetition of this pair by a local artist once again highlights the ways in which artists working at Sinai adapted standard iconography to communicate the importance of these saints for a varied audience.

In the thirteenth century the great vita icon of Saint Catherine was created for the monastery (cat. no. 55). Weitzmann suggests that this large panel with its central image of the saint surrounded by smaller scenes of her life and martyrdom may have been placed in proximity to the sarcophagus that contained her relics.[37] While the location of icons during the Middle Ages is not known and cannot be known because this is a portable medium, the large scale of this work does indeed suggest public rather than private devotional use. Furthermore, the iconographic elements that link this representation of Catherine to those of Georgian queens demonstrates how Sinai icon painting in the thirteenth century responded to both cult practice and international audience.[38]

Nancy Ševčenko has suggested that the vita icon could have been created as a response to the influx of Christian pilgrims to the monastery during this period.[39] The growing scholarship on the veneration of Saint Catherine demonstrates that her cult spread well beyond Sinai and may have even had an earlier foothold in the West.[40] The creation of this vita icon, the most comprehensive hagiographic treatment of Catherine in Byzantine art, came not only when Latin pilgrims were coming to the site but also when the monastery was sending its own envoys westward.

The same Abbot Symeon responsible for the typikon in which Catherine's feast appears had traveled to Venice and Rome in 1211 to petition authorities for protection against Latin encroachments on the monastery's properties in the Mediterranean, particularly Crete, following the Venetian occupation in 1206.[41] The monastery, while geographically isolated, nevertheless relied heavily on its dependencies in the Mediterranean for revenue and supplies.[42] Under Symeon, the monastery had been awarded properties on Crete in 1203. The abbot's efforts to secure confirmation of properties from the doge and the promise of future protections from the pope were successful. In the bulla granting certain protections to the monastery, Pope Honorius continued to refer to it as "the monastery of Saint Mary."[43] Yet despite this association, pilgrims' accounts from this time document the growing role of Catherine in the life of the monastery, not only on her feast day but also through the ritualistic display of her relics that Thietmar described. A dual identity begins to form in the art at the monastery at this time—one reflecting the internal devotional practices and associations with theophany, the other with the martyr-saint who had a growing constituency in Italy and regions farther west.

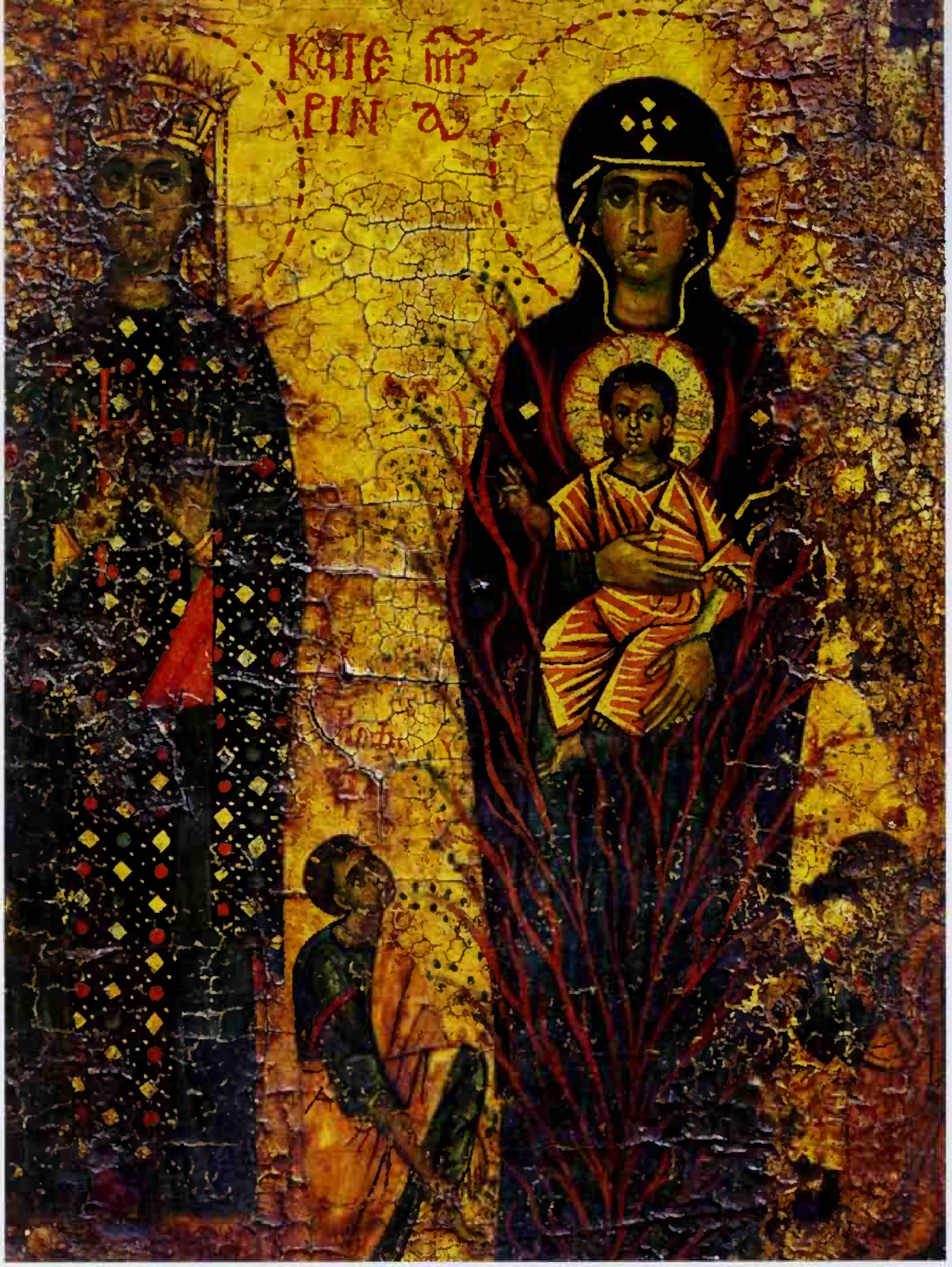


Figure 85
Saint Catherine with the Virgin of the Burning Bush, thirteenth century (detail, cat. no. 56)

LOCA SANCTA ICONS

The greatest number of icons with site-specific, or "Sinaitic," imagery appear in the thirteenth century. The Catherine vita icon dates to this period, as do the paired icons of Moses before the Burning Bush and Moses Receiving the Law (cat. no. 51, fig. 130) and a lesser-known but important icon that unites Moses, Mary, and Catherine in one work (fig. 85, and see cat. no. 56).[44] This icon represents a Virgin Kyriotissa accompanied by Saint Catherine, who wears imperial robes. On either side of the Virgin, who holds the Christ child in the flaming branches of the bush, stand two smaller images of Moses. The placement of Catherine and the Virgin side by side bridges the divide between the physical relics of Catherine, the focus of Latin pilgrims' accounts, and the emphasis on Moses and Mary as witnesses of the divine, seen in the earlier art and architecture of the site. This icon bears a certain iconographic similarity to the mosaic described by Father Niccolò in the fourteenth century and provides evidence for an even earlier, deliberate combination of the three great holy figures associated with this site in the visual arts at Sinai.

Figure 86
Virgin Kykkotissa, right wing of a diptych, last quarter of the thirteenth century. Tempera and gold on panel, 50.5 × 39.9 cm (19⅞ × 15¾ in.). Note the Virgin of the Burning Bush at top of frame. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Figure 87
Virgin Kykkotissa, (detail, fig. 86), top of frame, showing Virgin of the Burning Bush.

This is the earliest example in which the association of the Kyriotissa with the Burning Bush was made through images rather than through inscription or placement within holy space. The Kyriotissa figure is almost identical to that seen in a series of thirteenth-century icons that include the exhibited panel of Moses with the Virgin and Child (cat. no. 52). Even the gold hatching, known as *chrysography*, that defines the folds of Christ's robe is identical to that of earlier icons. The most striking feature of the composition, however, is the iconography of winding flames and green branches of the Burning Bush that twine around the Theotokos. The Virgin Kyriotissa wrapped in the flames of the bush constitutes a novel and expressive mode designed to make the Virgin's metaphoric and site-specific association with the Burning Bush clear to even those viewers not versed in Orthodox theology and those who had not had access to the Chapel of the Burning Bush.

This icon, like the image that Niccolò describes, brings together the three great holy figures of the monastery. The work may have been commissioned by a Latin pilgrim. In addition to the graphic flame imagery, the small size of the figure of Moses is odd, usually reserved for a donor figure, not a prophet. The development of this imagery more likely reflected an attempt on the part of local artists to create an iconography that would clearly communicate key elements of Eastern exegesis, asserting the role of the Mētēr Theou Vatou at the monastery even as Catherine became a major cult figure for Latin pilgrims.

The diptych of Saint Procopius and the Virgin Kykkotissa with saints and prophets is usually cited as the earliest work to display the imagery of the Virgin fully immersed in the Burning Bush (fig. 86). A small bust portrait of an orant Virgin surrounded by the Burning Bush appears on the frame of the Virgin Kykkotissa panel (fig. 87), which is likely the work of a Venetian or perhaps Crusader artist.[45] The inclusion of an image that links metaphor and site in so explicit a manner supports the idea that this newly specific imagery was influenced by Western viewers or patrons in the Holy Land. Mary is shown between her parents, Joachim

and Anna, a reference to her purity and a juxtaposition that emphasizes the exegetical context of this innovative imagery.

Earlier than either the Procopius diptych or the icon of Catherine and the Virgin of the Burning Bush (cat. no. 56) is a late-twelfth-century icon in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem (fig. 88). It joins the Annunciation scene to the scenes of Moses removing his sandal and reaching upward to shield his eyes from the divinity.[46] The Virgin sits at the center of the flaming bush, one hand raised in acceptance, as an angel approaches her from above. With the other hand she holds a spindle, a common iconographic device in Byzantine Annunciation scenes. The Christ child is visible as a ghostly bust portrait in a medallion on her chest. Moses appears twice, bending to remove his sandal and gesturing with raised hands before the bush. The icon has been associated with Sinai production on the basis of its site-specific imagery.[47] In two of the last three icons, the Virgin in flames refers explicitly to her virginity. The Procopius diptych depicts figures that reinforce the sinless conception of Jesus, and the Jerusalem icon combines the Annunciation and Moses before the Burning Bush.

Figure 88
Moses Removing His Sandals and Moses before the Virgin of the Burning Bush, end of the twelfth century. Tempera on panel, 72.5 × 39.5 cm (28½ × 15½ in.). The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem, Israel

The Ascension icon and the later image of the Virgin of the Burning Bush on the Procopius diptych fit into the broader category of *locus sanctus* (sacred place) icons for Sinai. Kurt Weitzmann introduced this category as a way to discuss works that featured holy figures or scenes while incorporating iconographic elements specific to a given site; these objects were thought to have functioned as votives or souvenirs for visitors to the site. Weitzmann's concept of the *locus sanctus* icon has been used to discuss those Sinai works displaying site-specific elements, such as the Burning Bush or, beginning in the thirteenth century, images of Catherine. Weitzmann rightly identified the danger in trying to identify a unifying style among the various pilgrimage centers of the Holy Land and the artistic production associated with these sites, but this general term can, in some cases, mask important differences in the artists' approach to the material.

In the case of the Sinai icons, the term *Vatou* was applied equally to the series of ten icons in which the Mother of God is understood to be "Vatou" (of the bush)[48] (cat. no. 52) and later works, such as the thirteenth-century Procopius diptych image, which Weitzmann noted for the "naturalistic" detail of its flames.[49] Grouping such diverse works as Virgin Kyriotissa series and the Procopius diptych image solely for their reference to the Burning Bush, however, overlooks their distinct expressive vocabularies and possible contexts—such as differing audience and patron groups.

By the twelfth century the Burning Bush, attested in exegesis and hymnology, appeared frequently in the art of Byzantium and Christian Egypt as one of the symbols of the Virgin. An early-twelfth-century icon at the monastery, probably created in Constantinople, shows the Virgin Kykkotissa surrounded by smaller images of Christ in glory, prophets, and saints (fig. 89).[50] Through the selection of prophets and the texts they display, the icon presents a complex theological statement about redemption through the Incarnation. For example, Moses before the Burning Bush bears a scroll inscribed, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight" (EXOD. 3:3). Two registers below him the prophet Ezekiel stands before a closed gate, another symbol of Mary's virginity, and holds a scroll with the words, "And the Lord said unto me; this gate shall be shut" (EZEK. 44:2).

A twelfth-century Coptic fresco in the Monastery of the Syrians at Scetis (Wadi al-Natrun) similarly associates the Annunciation scene with the prophets Isaiah, Moses, Ezekiel and Daniel.[51] Each prophet holds a scroll foretelling Mary's virginity (fig. 90). Moses' inscription reads, "I saw the bush burnt with fire, and it was not consumed," while Ezekiel's text again refers to the closed gate that may not be opened. As Lucy-Anne Hunt noted, these prophecies were read in the Orthodox Church for the Feast of the Annunciation.[52] While this image was tailored for the needs of a Coptic monastery, its shared imagery of the prophets Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel—seen in the Byzantine Kykkotissa icon at Sinai—displays an awareness of Byzantine hymnography and of Byzantine art in the service of Orthodox theology.[53]

Figure 89 (left)
Virgin Kykkotissa Surrounded by Christ in Glory, Prophets, and Saints, first half of twelfth century. Tempera and gold on panel, 48.5 × 41.2 cm (19 1/8 × 16 1/4 in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Figure 90 (below)
Annunciation fresco in the western semidome of the church of the Virgin, twelfth century. Dayr al-Suryan (Monastery of the Syrians), Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt.

ORIGINS OF THE BURNING BUSH TYPE

Contrary to the prevailing assumption that the type of Virgin shown within the flaming bush must have originated in Byzantium, the earliest examples of the Virgin fully immersed in the flaming bush originated in the Holy Land during the time of the Latin occupation.[54] The only earlier Burning Bush images to visualize the Marian metaphor are found in two Byzantine manuscripts, the illustrated homilies on the life of the Virgin by the monk James.[55] Probably illuminated in the second quarter of the twelfth century in Constantinople, these manuscripts depict Moses twice, commanded by an angel above. First, as in the later Sinai icons, he removes his sandal before the Burning Bush and then holds the staff that turns into a serpent. In this instance, the bush contains an image of the cross-nimbed Christ Emmanuel, not the Virgin, a composition repeated in the second homily on the Nativity of the Virgin in the Vatican manuscript (fig. 91). The Constantinopolitan tradition thus differs from the icons at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and Saint Catherine's.

The Virgin in the illuminations for James's *Homilies* is represented not within the Burning Bush but as the bush itself. Moses approaches a flaming bush containing a medallion portrait of Christ Emmanuel. The Virgin is not pictured because the entire bush here is understood as a metaphor for Mary. This image reflects the shift that occurred between early exegetical writings and hymnography: Among exegetes such as Gregory of Nyssa, the Burning Bush referred initially to Mary's virginity.[56] As Tzvetkova-Ivanova has demonstrated, when this metaphor passed into hymnology the meaning expanded, so that by the fifth century, with the writings of Proclus, the Burning Bush could be understood as a more comprehensive symbol for Mary."[57]

The textual context of the Vatican image emphasizes the overall person of Mary; the fact that it does not accompany the homily on the Annunciation removes it from the specific link between the Burning Bush and Mary's virginity. For the Byzantine viewer, who would have been familiar with the texts and hymns that established the bush as a symbol for Mary, an image of Moses standing before a burning bush that enclosed an image of Christ would have communicated this concept in a clear visual shorthand.

In the twelfth-century Burning Bush–Annunciation icon now in Jerusalem (see fig. 88), however, the iconography is so specific that the intended viewer was not required to bring knowledge of Eastern hymnology to these images. The specificity of this image suggests outsider (Latin) viewership. The traditional iconography of the Annunciation—spindle, seated Virgin, and ghostly image of Christ in the medallion—are combined with the representation of Moses and Burning Bush to augment any gap in the viewer's understanding of the exegetical link between the Virgin and the Burning Bush.

This association is reinforced in the thirteenth-century Procopius diptych, a Crusader work created for the monastery. Here the Virgin in the Burning Bush appears between her parents, Joachim and Anna, in an allusion to her own sinless conception. In both examples, the addition of iconography relating to Mary's purity allows the Virgin in the flames to be understood even by those viewers not steeped in Eastern exegesis, as the bush that burned and was not consumed.

Such a programmatic approach to the representation of Burning Bush exegesis can also be seen in one of the great thirteenth-century monuments of the West. In portal sculpture on the north porch of Chartres, Mary stands over a socle clearly depicting the flames and foliage of the Burning Bush (fig. 92).[58] Part of a Visitation scene, she turns to Elizabeth and reveals that she will bear the son of God (LUKE 1:39).

Figure 91 (below)
Moses before the Burning Bush, Vat. Gr. 1162, fol. 54v. Vatican Library, Rome, Italy.

Figure 92 (right)
The Visitation, ca. 1225. North porch, Chartres Cathedral, France.

We cannot know the conditions under which the Jerusalem Burning Bush icon (fig. 88) was created, whether as a work for the monastery at Sinai or its dependency in Acre, or perhaps even as a souvenir for a pilgrim who had visited the monastery. This work's blended imagery does suggest, however, that the new Burning Bush type was forged as a means of giving form to one of the great holy figures for Sinai in a manner that would be easily accessible. As in the combined image at Chartres, the narrative cues would have underscored the exegetical meaning of the Burning Bush.

Figure 93
Moses before the Burning Bush and *Aaron and Moses before Pharoah*, first quarter of thirteenth century English psalter (Codex Monacensis Lat. 835), fol 18r. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Germany.

Figure 94
Stained-glass window with Moses before the Burning Bush, first quarter of the thirteenth century. East wall, clerestory. Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France.

In addition to the Procopius diptych, at least one other example suggests the appeal of Burning Bush imagery for the Latin faithful in the Holy Land. A twelfth-century fresco in the church of Mart Barbara, Tripoli (Lebanon) showed the Virgin Orans with Christ in a medallion, inscribed *IC XC Emmanuel*.[59] The image, formerly in the apse of the church, showed the Virgin flanked by two angels and two clusters of flames. While this does not provide an example of the inhabited bush iconography seen in the Sinai icons, it suggests a wider diffusion of Burning Bush imagery in the art of the Holy Land than has previously been considered. An awareness of Sinai as one of the great sites of the Holy Land probably contributed to the creation of this image.

The inhabited Burning Bush imagery seen in the Jerusalem icon and the monastery's icon of Catherine and the Virgin of the Burning Bush—with the Virgin wrapped in branches and flames to her shoulders—has analogies in contemporary Burning Bush imagery in the West. In the Western examples however, the bush contains an image of the mature Christ, rather than the Virgin or the young Christ Emmanuel. In these images a half-length figure of the bearded Christ emerges from the top of the bush and, through gesture and gaze, engages in dialogue with Moses. This active engagement creates a narrative element lacking in the Byzantine examples. As seen in a thirteenth-century English psalter, Moses bends to remove his shoes while a bust figure of Christ, his shoulders and face visible above the articulated flames of the bush, turns to the prophet (fig. 93).[60] This type also appears in an early-thirteenth-century window at Chartres (fig. 94).[61] Despite a variation in the representation of the bush, which here blossoms from an elongated trunk, the half-length figure of Christ rising above the flames demonstrates the use of the "immersion" iconography for the depictions of the bush in Western art.

Between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a change occurred in the manner in which the long-established connection between the Virgin and the Burning Bush was expressed through the art at Sinai. The imagery of the thirteenth-century, Kyriotissa-series icons and the Virgin of the Burning Bush on the frame of the Procopius diptych constitute distinct modes of expression that can be attributed in this specific case to different patron groups—the Kyriotissa-series icons were likely created at the monastery, while the Procopius diptych has Western associations.[62] Other early examples of the Burning Bush type cannot be so easily classified however. In the case of the Burning Bush–Annunciation icon now in Jerusalem and the thirteenth-century image of Catherine and the Virgin of the Burning Bush with Moses (cat. no. 56), there is no evidence that points to Latin patronage.

The thirteenth century is often discussed as the period that gave rise to the most site-specific "Sinaitic" iconography; however, the categorization of Sinaitic, or *loca sancta,* icons does little to advance an understanding of function and audience. While future scientific study may reveal more information about the materials and places of origin of these works, it is not possible at this time to determine a patron or artist group with any degree of certainty. Knowing the cultural and devotional exchange that occurred at Sinai, however, we can at least examine the ways in which the artists who made these works chose to express the sacred nature of this site. Particularly in the images of the Virgin of the Burning Bush, we can see the existence of two distinct modes of expression that may reflect the varied expectations of the inhabitants of and visitors to the site.

At Sinai the association of the Virgin with the Burning Bush manifested itself in icons in which the Virgin was designated as the Vatos through inscription even while a new expressive device—the image of the Virgin shown fully engulfed in the flames of the bush—came into use. Through this we may view these icons not simply as a record of those particular figures venerated at the site but as objects that can provide a clearer understanding of the way in which the monastery adapted to address the expectations of its diverse audience. At same time Catherine became a tangible and, through the regular display of her relics, a highly visible presence at the monastery. The Mētēr Theou Vatou, formerly a concept communicated through inscription, was developed into a new visual type accessible to all.

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CODA

At the monastery, the imagery of Theotokos the Vatos continued into the fourteenth century: two examples that remain there include an icon of a bearded Moses before the Virgin of the Burning Bush (fig. 95) and a similar image on the left wing of a triptych showing the twelve Great Feasts, or Dodekaorton, with Sinaitic saints, including Saint Catherine (figs. 96, 97). Probably produced at the monastery,[63] both examples demonstrate the persistence of this type during the period in which Latin pilgrimage to the site continued to grow, even after the Crusaders were expelled from the Holy Land in 1291. A fifteenth-century fresco of

Figure 96 (above)
Triptych with Dodekaorton (Twelve Feasts), Saints, and the Virgin of the Burning Bush, end of fourteenth or beginning of fifteenth century. Tempera on panel, 35 × 61 cm (13¾ × 24 in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Father Justin Sinaites.

Figure 97 (left)
Triptych with Dodekaorton (detail, fig. 96), top of left panel, showing Virgin in the Burning Bush.

Figure 95 (opposite)
Moses before the Burning Bush, fourteenth to fifteenth century. Tempera on panel, 22.9 × 17.8 cm (9 × 7 in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Father Justin Sinaites.

the Virgin of the Burning Bush in the Chapel of Saint James displays yet another variation of this type (fig. 98).[64] It is also in the Palaeologan period that we find the earliest evidence for the export of this imagery into the visual culture of Byzantium proper. The church of Saint Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki contains a fourteenth-century fresco of Moses before the Theotokos Vatos that resembles the composition of the twelfth-century icon in Jerusalem; Moses appears twice, below and beside a figure of the seated Virgin, who is enveloped in the flames of the bush.[65]

After the thirteenth century, when the identity of the monastery was well established, artists of the East and the West created varying images of the monastery's venerated patrons, from an International Gothic Catherine as Latin princess (cat. no. 57) to post-Byzantine images of Catherine as Byzantine empress and philosopher. The monastery possesses several images of Theotokos the Vatos as it was developed on Crete. In this type, the Virgin appears on a mountain peak at the center of a stylized mandorla-like bush; in addition to the two traditional images of Moses before the bush, a third scene shows the prophet receiving the tablets of the law. The seventeenth-century icon by the Cretan artist Jeremiah Palladas on the iconostasis at Sinai demonstrates both of these types: Catherine sits in the foreground, garbed as an empress with symbols of her knowledge and martyrdom, while the Virgin of the Burning Bush appears in the background to the left (see fig. 77). It was thus in ateliers far from the monastery that images of the holy figures of Sinai developed into standardized types. In the process, the idiosyncratic experiments of local patrons and artists disappeared, and artists who had never visited the God-trodden monastery now gave it visual form.

Figure 98 (opposite)
Virgin of the Burning Bush, fifteenth century. Fresco. Chapel of Saint James, main church. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

NOTES

1. Bellorini and Hoade 1945, p. 106.
2. Bellorini and Hoade 1945, on his probable itinerary, pp. viii–ix.
3. Bellorini and Hoade 1945, p. 106. While no trace of the mosaic remains today, Father Niccolò's descriptions of certain icons he observed in the church and surrounding chapels resonate with works that remain there today. This suggests that such an arrangement must have been in place in some form at this time. Drandaki speculates that the images described by Niccolò consisted of a collection of panels, one of which could have been the thirteenth-century Virgin Hodegetria mosaic. See Drandaki 2004, p. 38.
4. Procopius (in *Buildings* 5.8) wrote that the church was dedicated to the Mother of God. Dewing 1954–62, vol. 7, p. 356.
5. Gingras 1970, p. 55.
6. Beginning in the sixteenth century pilgrims' accounts identify the Church of the Transfiguration, in response to its great apse mosaic. For more on the Latin pilgrims' response to the monastery, see Braun 1973.
7. Procopius (sixth century). Dewing 1954–62, p. 357.
8. Malherbe and Ferguson 1978, p. 59: "The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth." For more on the metaphorical associations see Tzvetkova-Ivanova 2000, p. 28.
9. Sinai cod. 1097, transcribed in Dmitrievskij 1895–1917, and translated in N. P. Ševčenko 2004, pp. 274–86. Elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire, the feast day for Saint Catherine was given as either November 24 or 25 from the tenth century on. Mateos 1962, vol. 1, pp. 112, 114.
10. N. P. Ševčenko 2004, pp. 274–86.
11. See fig. 15, herein. These paired scenes appear repeatedly in the art at Sinai, the earliest example can be seen engraved on the arms of a sixth-century bronze cross, probably made in Syria or Palestine for the monastery (see cat. no. 35).
12. See Thomas F. Mathews, "Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai," herein.
13. Although a later thirteenth-century icon with a small image of the orant Virgin within a flaming bush is often referred to as the earliest of this image type, this tenth-century work is usually mentioned as a possible precursor; see Weitzmann 1976. Weitzmann wrote that the unusual feature of the red-flowering bush likely constituted an attempt by the artist to associate this plant with the Burning Bush of Mount Sinai. Doula Mouriki reiterated this assessment in Mouriki 1988.
14. Galavaris 1990, p. 96.
15. Galavaris (1990, p. 96) writes that this relates to the liturgy of the Ascension (studied by Nichola Gioles).
16. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 70–71, and fig. B42. Mouriki 1988, p. 337 n. 25 (repeating Weitzmann); Galavaris 1990.
17. Weitzmann 1976, p. 70.
18. See Clédat 1904, pls. 11–44 (chapel 17). See also Weitzmann 1974, fig. 31.
19. Mouriki 1988, pp. 337–38.
20. Mouriki 1988, p. 338.
21. Weitzmann 1974, p. 53; Mouriki 1988, p. 338; Mouriki 1990, p. 113.
22. See David Jacoby, "Christian Pilgrimage to Sinai until the Late Fifteenth Century," herein, pp. 86–87.
23. N. P. Ševčenko forthcoming; N. P. Ševčenko 2006. I would like to thank Nancy Ševčenko for generously making her forthcoming work available to me.
24. *PG*, vol. 116, cols. 275–302.
25. *PG*, vol. 116, cols. 275–301, esp. 301B. The Menologion of Basil II (Vat. gr. 1613), *PG*, vol. 116, col. 207.
26. Restle 1969, vol. 2. See, for example, Goreme, chapel 9, pl. 129.
27. For the inclusion of Catherine in Metaphrastian menologia, see, for example, Paris BN gr. 580 and 1499, and Copenhagen, *Det Kongelige Bibliotek Gamle Kongelige Samnlung*, fol. 167. N. P. Ševčenko 1990. In N. P. Ševčenko forthcoming, the author discusses Saint Catherine's standing as an "unmoored" saint lacking a dedicated cult site and offers as further evidence of this the lack of church dedications to Catherine in the Byzantine East.
28. See cat nos. 28, 29, and 51 for Sinai icons as examples of Arab Christian contact with the monastery. While the most of the pilgrims were indeed Christian, the cult held a certain power for Muslim visitors to the site as well. Ludolf of Suchem wrote on the display of Catherine's relics "[A]t these times the Saracen guides and camel-drivers and grooms who come with the pilgrims earnestly beg that they, too, may be allowed to see these holy and wondrous bones, and kneel with the greatest devotion by the side of the Christians" (Stewart 1896, p. 86).
29. Dubois 1988, p. 91.
30. See Jacoby, herein, p. 87.
31. Laurent 1857, p. 43; translation from Latin: Braun 1973, p. 34.
32. G. Soteriou and M. G. Soteriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 50; vol. 2, p. 68.
33. Her representation with Marina of Antioch, another important saint for Byzantium, cannot have been inspired by their proximity on the church calendar, as their feast days fell months apart.
34. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 183; Weitzmann 1966b, fig. 50.
35. Weitzmann 1966b, p. 57.
36. Catherine holds the orb in the early-eleventh-century mosaics at Hosios Loukas; see N. Chatzidakis 1994; N. P. Ševčenko 2006; and thirteenth-century Byzantine wall paintings at Saint Nicholas in Corinth. See Aspra-Vardavakis 1986–87, pp. 123–24.
37. Weitzmann 1984b, p. 95.
38. Weitzmann 1984b points out that all vita icons at the monastery can be connected with chapels under the monastery's supervision or, in Catherine's case, one of the primary figures of veneration. For more on a possible relationship to Georgian ruler images, see cat. no. 55 and Nancy P. Ševčenko in New York 2004, pp. 342–43. Ševčenko writes that the detached *thorakion* with the double-barred cross can be seen in contemporary Georgian monuments.
39. Ševčenko 2006.
40. Catherine Guyon (2002, p. 38) points out that the earliest liturgical references to Catherine's feast day are found in Western manuscripts: a tenth-century calendar from Monte Cassino gives her feast as November 25, while the Sacramentary of Mont Saint Michel (B. M. Rouen, Ms. sup 116) lists the *missa de sancta Katerina*, p. 38. For the cult in the West, see Fawtier 1923; Jones 1976; Lewis 1999; Jenkins and Lewis 2003.
41. N. P. Ševčenko 2006.
42. Coureas 1996. The 1212 letter from the Venetian doge, Pietro Ziani, confirmed the monks' right to the duty-free export of "cheeses, cassocks, incense, olive oil and whatever might derive from the aforementioned estates," p. 477. See also Grigoriadis 1875, pp. 91–92.
43. Hofmann 1927, p. 226.
44. Weitzmann 1974, p. 54, fig. 51. When Weitzmann first published this work he described it as an image of Saint Catherine and the Virgin with one image of Moses standing between the two. This may be in part due to its condition; the surface, though now stable, has lifted in large flakes, and the figure of Catherine is partially obscured by varnish. The fact that he neglected to mention the second figure standing to the right of the Virgin may indicate that the work has undergone cleaning since.
45. For the Procopius diptych, see Mouriki 1990, pp. 118–19, pl. 65; and Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, pp. 355–56, no. 214.
46. Huber 1980, pp. 184–88, pl. 146; and Boespflug 1992, p. 12, fig. 1.
47. Mouriki 1990, p. 103.
48. Mouriki (1990, p. 109, and 1988, p. 346) accepts the Sotirious dating (G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 163, and vol. 2, p. 143) and assigns the series to the thirteenth century, while Weitzmann 1974, p. 53, suggests a late-twelfth/early-thirteenth-century date.
49. Weitzmann 1974, p. 53.
50. Mouriki (1990, pp. 105, 115, fig. 19) suggests that on the basis of the work's technical and theological sophistication it was created in Constantinople.
51. Hunt 1995.
52. Hunt 1995, pp. 196–200.
53. Hunt discusses the incense imagery as even more specifically referring to the Coptic liturgy of the Catechumens, the common confession.
54. Weitzmann 1976, p. 71. Weitzmann wrote that the association of the Virgin with the Burning Bush on the ninth/tenth century icon was analogous to later images such as that on the Procopius diptych. M. Aspra-Vardavakis also comments on the first appearance of the full-immersion imagery in Aspra-Vardavakis 2002, pp. 94–95. Weitzmann further suggests that despite its earliest appearance on this thirteenth-century Crusader icon, this image type must have originated in the East several centuries earlier. Weitzmann 1966b, p. 67 and fig. 35.
55. Vat. Gr. 1162, fol. 54v, and Paris gr. 1208, fol. 73v. Stornajolo 1910. See also Bréhier 1920. An additional Byzantine example, no longer extant, could be found in the Smirna Physiologus. See Bernabò 1998, pl. 81. The illumination juxtaposed a scene of Moses before the bush with a Hodegetria icon, once again demonstrating the implicit association of the Virgin with the Burning Bush in Byzantine representations.
56. Gregory writes in the Life of Moses, "From this we learn also the mystery of the Virgin: The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virgin-

ity was not withered by giving birth." Malherbe and Ferguson 1978, p. 59.

57. Tzvetkova-Ivanova 2000, p. 13.
58. Circa 1220 Chartres north porch, left portal, right embrasure; Kidson 1958.
59. Dodd 2004, p. 218, and index, fig. 71; pls. 7.1–7.6, color pl. 34. From the Church of Mart Barbara in Barghoun, Lebanon. This fresco was destroyed sometime after 1997.
60. Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek Codex Monacensis Lat. 835, fol. 18 (first quarter of the thirteenth century); Rickert 1954, p. 112.
61. Delaporte 1926, pp. 5–18.
62. Mouriki 1990, p. 118. Mouriki suggests that this icon may have been painted by a Venetian artist working in Jerusalem.
63. Weitzman 1974, pl. 50, p. 53; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 220, and vol. 2, pp. 193–94. A partially effaced inscription on the back appears to bear the name of the painter, Kimon (KHMON), as well as the incomplete name of a steward, [ANA]CTACI[OC], which the Soterious transcribed as "Anastasios." I am grateful to Father Justin Sinaites for his photograph of this icon.
64. In Paliouras 1990, p. 70; see also p. 383 n. 2. Compare M. Chatzidakis 1970–72 on conch mural in chapel of Saint James. The artists who created this image restricted the flames of the bush to the red maphorion worn by the Virgin Playtera, who stands flanked by Saints John Climacus and Basil to the right and Saint John Chrysostom and Moses to the left. Located next to one of the entrances to the Chapel of the Burning Bush, this chapel was also the site, in recent years, that displayed the Cretan triptych of Theotokos the Vatos with Catherine laid to rest by angels (see cat. no. 58).
65. Kirchainer 2001, p. 212, fig. 71.

HOLY IMAGE

[Icons] of my Supremely good Christ and the Mother of God and Kosmosoteira are respectively represented with great skill, so that the images appear alive to the beholder, and as though letting out a beautiful sound from their mouths toward him.

RULE OF THE MONASTERY OF KOSMOSOTEIRA, 1152[1]

When you look at an icon, the icon looks back. The frontal face, large eyes, symmetrical design, and brilliant gold ground command your attention. Icons also talk back. Gestures, glances, and especially inscriptions allow the holy person to address the faithful, who pray to and through the icon. Icons are doors, gates, windows, but not in the Renaissance sense of a painting as a window into another world. The saint depicted is on, or in front of, the picture plane. Icons are thus places where the divine enters the space of the beholder.

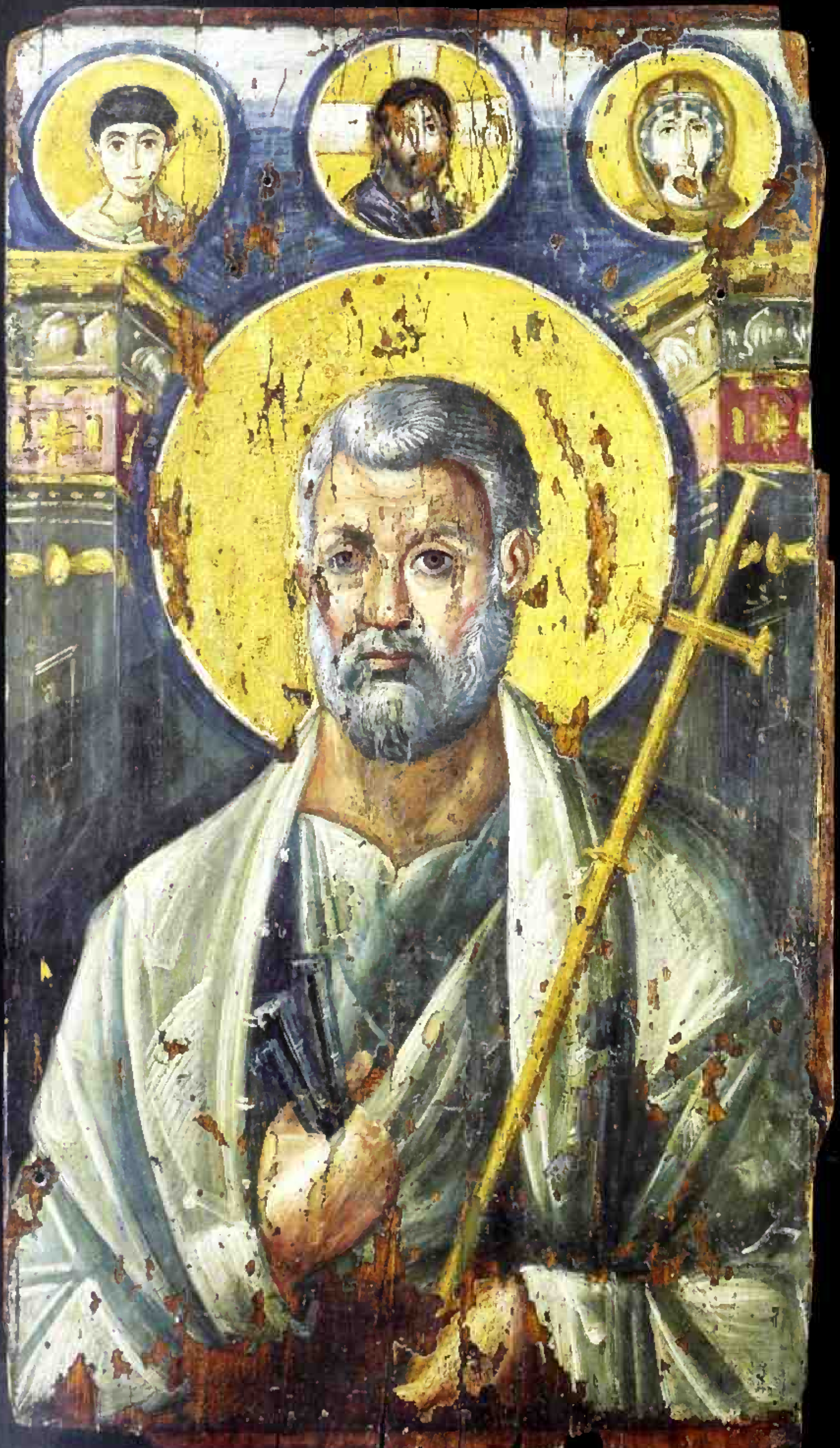
In Greek, the word *icon* means image; holy icons are not confined to a particular artistic medium or material. Individual icons are not original to themselves; they replicate a set of traditional types that are illustrated on the following pages.

Constant companions of men and women in the Middle Ages, the icons in this exhibition remain to this day a vital part of the spiritual and aesthetic treasury that is the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai.

Figure 99 (opposite) Saint Peter the Apostle, sixth century (detail, cat. no. 1).

NOTE

1. Translated from the Greek by N. P. Ševčenko in Thomas 1998, p. 802.



1 Saint Peter the Apostle

Sixth century

Encaustic on panel

93.4 × 53.7 × 1.25 cm (36¾ × 21⅛ × ½ in.)

CONDITION

Good condition. Halos and selected architectural details have been gilded. Scattered losses throughout the painting; several areas have been repainted. Greater loss to painting along bottom register. Medallion of Christ has several scratches that appear to be deliberate. Thin layer of varnish of a later date.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

Figure 100
Anastasius, right panel of diptych, AD 517. Ivory, 36 × 13 cm (14⅛ × 5⅛ in.). Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (55-296 BIS).

THE LARGEST OF THE EARLY ICONS OF SINAI, presenting an almost-life-size half figure, this icon enunciates a theme of grand importance.[1] Saint Peter was immediately recognizable already in the fourth century as "an old man with hair and beard cut short," according to Epiphanius, the bishop of Cyprus.[2] Although in modern times he is commonly identified with the papacy, in early Christianity the first apostle had much more complex associations. The Gospels describe his close relationship with Christ, and the Acts of the Apostles tells of Peter's leadership role in the early Church, including authority in life-and-death judgments (ACTS 5:1–11) as well as the power to cure by the mere passage of his shadow (ACTS 5:15).

In the post-apostolic era a rich literature of apocrypha and legend grew up around his cult, including stories of his competition in magic with Simon Magus, and the "Domine, quo vadis?" story of his crucifixion.[3] Fleeing Rome during Nero's persecution, Peter encountered Christ on the Appian Way going in the opposite direction. "Where are you going, my Lord?" he asked. "I come to be crucified anew," Christ answered, and Peter promptly turned back to take his place on the cross. The cross Peter carries over his left shoulder alludes to the story. The keys in his right hand allude to Christ's bestowal on Peter of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (MATT. 16:19). Keys are also an attribute of abbots, which may add another level of meaning to the image.[4]

The icon presents Saint Peter in an outdoor setting before a classical niche decorated with a succession of bead-and-reel molding, a red-and-gold frieze, a cyma course, and a gold cornice. In the sky above are three gold medallions with bust images of Christ, the Mother of God, and a youthful saint—perhaps John the Evangelist. This association of the figure of Saint Peter with other, higher authorities in medallions reflects a composition developed in official government circles for presenting the consul. For example, in diptychs made for the accession of the consul, Anastasius the emperor, the empress, and a co-consul appear in medallions overhead (fig. 100).[5] In adopting this pictorial device for the icon, however, the artist has carefully purged it of all symbols of secular power—the eagle scepter, the nike figures, the lion throne, and the circus, which was the special arena of consular authority. Instead of the heavy leather loros of consular office, Saint Peter dresses in the civilian garb of a philosopher, with his right arm caught in the sling of his cloak. His authority is of another kind: "a spiritual leader, of aristocratic demeanor," as Weitzmann characterizes him.[6]

On stylistic grounds Weitzmann attributes the icon to Constantinople in the late sixth or early seventh century. But the group of Sinai icons with medallions seems to form a close unit with the Sinai Pantocrator and the Enthroned Mother of God with Angels. The range of styles in this group of icons has been examined by Hans Belting, who places them in the sixth century.[7] It is tempting to associate the Saint Peter icon personally with the emperor Justinian, whose Christian name was Peter.[8]

The icon has lost its grooved frame along with a narrow strip on each side. Heavy damage in the lower parts show wear from touching and kissing.

TFM

NOTES

1. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 23–26, with discussion of earlier bibliography.
2. C. Mango 1972, p. 42.
3. Acts of Peter, 35.
4. Rutschowscaya 1998, pp. 30–31.
5. Delbrueck 1929, no. 21.
6. Weitzmann 1976, p. 25.
7. Belting 1994, pp. 132–42.
8. See Mathews, "Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai," herein.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 1, 2, and vol. 2, pp. 19–21; Lazarev 1967, pp. 92–93; A. Grabar 1968, pp. 78–79; Volbach and Lafontaine-Dosogne 1968, pp. 179–80; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 23–26; Kitzinger 1977, p. 120; Belting 1994, pp. 113–14, 132–33, 142–43.

2 Saint John the Baptist

Sixth century

Encaustic on panel

46.8 × 25.1 × 5–6.7 cm (18 × 9⅞ × 2–2⅝ in.)

CONDITION
Extensive loss to paint films, revealing panel support. No evidence of repainting. The panel has a series of vertical cracks; one large vertical loss runs length of panel. Rough-hewn on reverse.

The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts, Kiev, Ukraine

SECLUDED IN THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA, the rugged ascetic John the Baptist "wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey" (MATT. 3:4). Christ called him the last of the prophets and the "Elijah who is to come" (MATT. 11:14). In his icon he resembles the historic Elijah found in the Justinianic mosaic of the church of Sinai, wearing a similar cloak of hair, a metal-studded belt, and a brown tunic.[1] A model for the monk's life of self-denial, the Baptist was one of the most popular of Byzantine saints, with thirty-six churches in his honor in Constantinople. One may imagine that his icon was offered at Mount Sinai as a votive by a newly enrolled monk.

This exhibition's reunion of this icon and that of Saints Sergius and Bacchus (see cat. no. 3), both of which were taken from Sinai to Kiev in the nineteenth century with the grand Saint Peter icon (see cat. no. 1), affords a unique opportunity to assess an important phase of early Byzantine painting in Constantinople.[2] The three icons share the device of medallions that link the figures to higher powers in a superior register. Saint John is seen pointing with his right hand to the medallion of Christ and displaying with his other hand a scroll that reads, "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (JOHN 1:29). The medallion in the other corner shows the Mother of God. (For the connection of this medallion device with official Constantinopolitan iconography, see cat. no. 1.)

At the Council of Trullo in 692 it was required that in images of this theme Christ be represented incarnate, as he is in the present medallion, rather than in the symbolic form of a lamb, as for example in the Cathedra of Maximianos.[3] On this basis Kathleen Corrigan argued for a date after the council,[4] but the iconography of the incarnate Christ with the gesturing Saint John existed even before the council, as Corrigan acknowledges, and the present style fits better with an earlier dating. In spite of the heavy loss of pigment, Weitzmann sensed the presence of a strongly modelled figure with the classic face of a tragic mask, who moves with freedom in a turbulent landscape. The Hellenistic shading of the drapery and the expressive quality of the face led him to suppose an early-sixth- or even late-fifth-century date. But a pre-Justinianic date is hard to justify in an icon offered to the monastery that Justinian founded. Rather, it makes sense to group all the medallion icons together in the mid-sixth century, along with their close *comparanda* the Pantocrator and the Enthroned Mother of God with Angels. Lively prophets in landscapes are an important part of the iconography of the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna of Justinianic date.[5]

The icon has lost its frame and with it the right and left edges. The extensive loss of pigment reveals a surprising lack of ground preparation; the paint was laid directly on the wooden board.

TFM

NOTES
1. Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973, pl. 106.
2. On this phase of early Byzantine icon painting see Belting 1994, pp. 132–42. On the present icon see Weitzmann 1976, pp. 32–35, with discussion of earlier bibliography.
3. Volbach 1962, fig. 227.
4. Corrigan 1988.
5. Deichmann 1958.

REFERENCES
Lazarev 1967, p. 93; Volbach and Lafontaine-Dosogne 1968, p. 79; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 32–35; Belting 1994, pp. 113, 132, 142; Corrigan 1995.

3 Saints Sergius and Bacchus

Sixth century

Encaustic and gold on panel

28.4 × 42.5 × 5–6 cm (11³⁄₁₆ × 16⁷⁄₁₆ × 2–2³⁄₈ in.)

CONDITION

Fair. Some losses to surface; areas of former retouching discolored throughout. Remnants of gilding on background of halos. Large crack runs through faces of both figures, with significant paint loss along crack. Orange was added to the border of the painted surface on the left side. Applied frame added later.

The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts, Kiev, Ukraine

LIKE THE ICON OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST (see cat. no. 2), this icon was brought from Sinai to Kiev in the mid-nineteenth century.[1]

It is one of the axioms of icon study that the early icons were executed in encaustic—that is, wax was used for the medium—but surprisingly little scientific research has been done to confirm this.[2] On the basis of his experienced ocular inspection, reinforced in some instances by consultation with conservators, Weitzmann identified encaustic in most early icons at Sinai, but no analyses were done.[3] Three of the four of the earliest icons in Rome are also said to be encaustic, but only the icon of Santa Maria in Trastevere was subjected to any scientific examination—at the Istituto Centrale del Restauro.[4] It is therefore gratifying to have a scientific examination of three icons in Kiev—including that of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, shown here—which confirmed wax as the medium for all three.[5] The wood of this icon was identified as stone pine (*Pinus pinea*), commonly called the umbrella pine, native to the Iberian Peninsula but widely cultivated around the Mediterranean. The grain runs horizontally in the icon, which was dictated by the unusual horizontal format. The ground was prepared with a coat of calcite white followed by white lead, and pigments are white lead, smalt for the blue-green background, ultramarine for the blue outline of the halo, cadmium sulfide for the red outline of the halo, ultramarine mixed with crimson for Sergius's cloak. Described by Pliny the Elder, the encaustic medium is responsible for the glowing tones and glossy finish of the painting; a medium of egg or glue yields a more matte finish.[6] The choice of encaustic for icons would seem to reflect their connections with portrait painting; the majority of the Fayyum mummy portraits are in encaustic, but no encaustic has appeared in some seventy panel paintings of the ancient gods, also from the Fayyum.[7]

Saints Sergius and Bacchus carry martyrs' crosses. Military officers of the ranks of *primicerius* and *secundocerius* in service on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire, they were executed for their profession of Christianity under the emperor Maximian (r. 286–305). Their cult was already established by the mid-fifth century, and Justinian seems to have taken them as special patrons in his contest with the Persians, founding a church in their honor in Constantinople.[8] In the present icon they dress rather for the court than for the battlefield, wearing gold tunics and light-colored cloaks, or *chlamydes*, with jeweled torques, or *maniakia*, around their necks. Military officers in the personal guard of Emperors Theodosius and Justinian wear such torques. Giving the saints the light complexion of youth, the artist has only slightly individualized them. They turn a little toward each other and toward the medallion of Christ, whose authority they share.

Scholarship has wavered on the dating of the panel between the sixth and the seventh century. Weitzmann points out its very close resemblances to the Enthroned Mother of God with Angels, in the facial types of the soldiers and in minor details such as the punched decoration of the border of the gold halo. A sixth-century dating for the latter is now more generally accepted, which would make Saints Sergius and Bacchus part of the splendid flowering of painting in Constantinople under Justinian.[9] The framing of the icon is secondary; generally frames were made before the painting of the panel and painted along with the panel. The inscriptions of the saints' names are also later.

TFM

NOTES

1. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 28–30.
2. The traditional approach to encaustic painting is based exclusively on the review of literary sources in antiquity; Pfuhl 1923.
3. Weitzmann 1976
4. Amato 1988; Urbani 1964
5. Birstein, Bykova, and Naumova 1978, pp. 1–5.
6. Pliny, *Natural History*, 35.149.
7. Catalogue entries identify encaustic in three quarters of the Fayyum portraits in New York 2000; Norman Muller, conservator of paintings of the Princeton University Museum of Art, is studying the panel paintings in the project "Gods from Roman Egypt," now in progress with Vincent Muller and Thomas F. Mathews. His initial report, "Explorations into the Techniques of Late Antique Icons from the Fayum in Egypt," was presented at the Conservation Center, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, March 31, 2005.
8. Mathews 2005.
9. Hans Belting 1994, pp. 132–42.

REFERENCES

Volbach and Lafontaine-Dosogne 1968, p. 79; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 28–30; Birstein, Bykova, and Naumova 1978; Cyril Mango in *ODB*, s.v. "Sergios and Bakchos, Church of Saints."

ΓΕϹΤΑϹ

4 Crucifixion with Two Thieves

Eighth century

Tempera and gold on panel

46.6 × 25.1 × 1.4 cm (18⅜ × 9⅞ × $^{9}/_{16}$ in.)

INSCRIBED

Ι(ησοῦ)C [Χριστός] (Jesus Christ); Ο ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥ(δαίων) (King of the Jews); ΓΕCΤΑC (Gestas); ΔΗΜ(ας) (Demas); Η(άγία) Μ(αρία) (Saint Mary); ΙΩΑΝΝΗC (John)

CONDITION

Good condition overall. Crosses, decoration on Christ's robe and angels' halos originally gilded. Angels outlined in deep red paint; paint layer built up around figures, with artist using bare wood of panel to create middle tones. Large splits, breaks, and losses in wood panel. Remains of thin varnish.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS EIGHTH-CENTURY Crucifixion icon lies in its presentation of Christ on the cross with his eyes closed. While images of the crucified Christ are known from the early years of the fifth century, these and their successors showed Christ with his eyes open. Their open-eyed presentation has been understood to signal that Christ's divine nature continued to live even as his body died on the cross. The introduction of the closed-eyed type in this icon marks a significant turn in the representation of Christ, one that betrays an increased interest in the iconography of Christ's death in the later seventh and early eighth centuries.[1]

This Sinai image shows Christ after his death. The closed eyes and the blood and water flowing from his pierced side indicate this. The blood and the water bring two further themes into play. First, they show the presence of Christ's two natures, human and divine, at the moment of his death. In drawing attention to these natures, the icon attempts to accommodate the complexities of Christ's death. Being of two natures, Christ had to be understood to both live and die on the cross, a paradoxical concept that is difficult to convey by visual means. Here, the presence of the blood and the water implies the fundamental duality that underlies the incarnate and visibly deceased God. This might suggest that this icon shows that the divine had also died on the cross (a heretical view known as Theopaschitism), but a major source written by Anastasios, a monk at Sinai, in the second half of the seventh century suggests that the Crucifixion image was, rather, used to refute such an understanding by drawing attention to the reality of Christ's corporeal death on the cross and so distinguishing this death from the fate of his divine nature.[2]

Second, the depiction of blood and water in the icon, connoting the mixing together in the chalice of water and wine in the course of the eucharistic celebration, helps to link the sacrifice made at the Crucifixion with the sacrifice reiterated on the altar.[3]

CB

NOTES

1. Belting and Belting-Ihm 1966, pp. 36–39; Kartsonis 1986, pp. 40–81. Kartsonis 1994, pp. 166–68.
2. Kartsonis 1986, pp. 40–81.
3. Kartsonis 1994, p. 168.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 25, and vol. 2, pp. 39–41; Belting and Belting-Ihm 1966, Weitzmann 1976, pp. 61–64, Galavaris 1990, p. 96; Kartsonis 1994, pp. 166–68

IC XC
YC ΘY

5 Ascension of Christ

Ninth/tenth century, Palestinian school, Sinai(?)

Tempera on panel

41.9 × 27.5 × 1.6 cm (16½ × 10¹³⁄₁₆ × ⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED

I(ησοῦ)C X(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); Y(ἱό)C Θ(εο)Υ (Son of God)

CONDITION

Very good condition. Parts of frame missing at top and bottom, with the ground extending only as far as the original frame. Abrasion and losses to paint layers along right and left edges may be from contact with original triptych wings. Three nail holes, top and bottom, are visible where ledges for the wings were once attached. Short cracks run through the panel from the nail holes at the bottom, and one crack runs from the top, bisecting Christ's face.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

ONCE THE CENTRAL ICON IN A TRIPTYCH, this work shows Christ's majestic ascent to heaven. Four angels bear him upward, their arms visible behind the transparent mandorla, while the apostles gesture animatedly below. Both Weitzmann and Galavaris noted the prominence of the Virgin, who is set apart from the group of assembled apostles on a footstool deemed unnecessary for a narrative scene.[1] The Virgin is further highlighted by the flowing lines of the angels' mantles, ending in points over her head, and the bush of red flowers directly behind her.

The gestures of the apostles initially appear to lack purpose; Weitzmann attributes their seeming incoherence to artistic weakness.[2] In fact, the artist created an explicitly mariological rendering of the Ascension scene. Unlike other Ascensions of the "active" type, in which the apostles motion energetically and stare upward, eight of the apostles direct their gazes and outstretched arms toward Mary (fig. 101).[3]

Weitzmann suggests that this work was an early manifestation of the Virgin of the Burning Bush motif, in which the Virgin appears fully immersed in the flames of the bush. This type does not otherwise appear until late-twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century icons associated with Sinai.[4] While this icon, like later examples, alludes to the established exegetical understanding of the Burning Bush as a symbol of Mary's virginity, its iconography draws from established Coptic and Palestinian models. This triptych was probably created at the

Figure 101
The Ascension. In the Rabbula Gospels, AD 586, fol. 13b. Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana Florence, Italy (Plut. 1.56).

Figure 102
Saint Theodore and Saint George on Horseback, outer wings of a triptych, ninth/tenth century. Tempera on panel. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Bruce White.

NOTES

1. Weitzmann 1976, p. 70; Galavaris 1990, p. 96.
2. Weitzmann 1976, p. 70.
3. For overview of Ascension iconography, see DeWald 1915.
4. Twelfth-century Jerusalem Patriarchate image (see fig. 88), thirteenth-century Procopius diptych (see fig. 86), thirteenth-century Catherine and Virgin of the Burning Bush (cat. no. 56).
5. Weitzmann writes that in the tenth century a colony of Georgian monks left the monastery of Saint Sabas in Jerusalem to reside at Sinai; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 72–73.
6. A. Grabar 1958.
7. The Monastery of Saint Apollo, Chapel XVII, Bawit, Egypt. Ascension fresco, probably between the sixth and eighth century; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 70–71, fig. 27. See also Iacobini 2000, fig. 19, pp. 46–48.
8. Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Codex Plut.1.56; Cecchelli, Furlani, and Salmi 1959.
9. See, for example, the Manganon Virgin in Athens 2000, p. 239, fig. 186.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1976; Galavaris 1990.

Figure 103
Virgin and Child. In the Rabbula Gospels, AD 586, fol. 1b. Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Italy (Plut.1.56).

monastery by Eastern artists; Weitzmann suggests that the side panel with Saint George spearing a human foe points to Georgian models (fig. 102), but the work also shares certain similarities with Palestinian and Coptic art.[5] The Ascension iconography resembles that seen in Palestinian pilgrim ampullae,[6] while the use of the flowering bush to make a connection to the site of the Burning Bush recalls examples from Coptic fresco painting (see fig. 79).[7]

While the Virgin's orant gesture and her position on a footstool call to mind the sixth-century Syriac Rabbula Gospels (fig. 103)[8] and relief icons of the eleventh century,[9] the added elements of the bush and the apostles' gestures suggest that the work was intended for placement in the Church of the Theotokos on the site of the Burning Bush.

KC

ΑΝΤΟΝ
ΕΦΡΕ

6 Presentation of the Mandylion to King Abgar

Tenth century, Sinai or Constantinople

Tempera and silver leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

Framed: 36.9 × 25.3 × 2.5 cm (13$\frac{9}{16}$ × 10 × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

Top left: Ο Α(γιος) [Θαδ]ΕΟC (Saint Thaddaeus); top right: ΑΓΓΑΡΟC (Abgar); bottom left: Ο Α(γιος) ΠΑΥΛΟC Ο ΘΗΒΕΟC (Saint Paul of Thebes); Ο Α(γιος) ΑΝΤΟΝΙΟC (Saint Anthony); bottom right: Ο Α(γιος) ΒΑCΙΛΙΟC (Saint Basil); Ο Α(γιος) ΕΦΡΕΜ (Saint Ephrem)

CONDITION

Image consists of two separate panels inserted into a pinned, lap-joint frame. The surface is very abraded with scattered losses and some repainting. Loss in wood on reverse of frame at top center. Left panel is split at right lower edge.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

6, reverse

THE TWO PANELS THAT COMPOSE THIS ICON were originally the wings of a triptych. Weitzmann argues that they were painted by an artist from Constantinople; he also asserts that the wings would have originally framed a painted version of the famous Mandylion, or an image of Christ made by a direct impression from Christ's face, called in Greek *acheiropoietos*, or "not made by hands." The Mandylion itself was one of the most important miracle-working relics of Byzantium. The icon panels call attention to the narrative and history of the relic.

In the upper left of the icon sits Thaddaeus, numbered as one of the seventy unnamed apostles in Luke 10:1–20. The seated King Abgar, in the upper right, who ruled Edessa between 4 BC and AD 13–50, is given an imperial setting and royal garb. An image of Christ appears on a cloth draped across Abgar's torso. Abgar does not actually seem to be holding the cloth, for his left hand is placed in front in a gesture of presentation and his right hand is not shown at all. At his side is Ananias "the messenger."[1] According to legend, on falling ill Abgar wrote to Christ and asked that he be healed. Abgar sent Ananias to carry the message to Christ and paint his portrait. By the sixth or seventh century, the story had changed so that instead of being painted, Christ pressed a hand towel, also called a *mandylion*, over his face, leaving an imprint of his image.[2] Hence the Mandylion was called the *acheiropoietos*. It was the image itself that healed Abgar.

In 944 Abgar's Mandylion entered Constantinople in a triumphal procession at the instigation of the emperor Romanos I. The emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913–959) wrote an encomium in honor of the first anniversary of this entrance. According to Weitzmann, Constantine VII had the portrait of King Abgar on the right triptych wing painted in his own likeness. In this way Constantine VII, the newly enthroned emperor, was able to claim credit for the relic's transfer.[3]

Belting suggests that the original central panel of the triptych could have been one of the two now found in Rome and in Genoa.[4] Wolf contends that this triptych was a diplomatic gift to Sinai meant to draw attention to Constantine VII's possession of the original Mandylion.[5] Weitzmann notes the relationship of the portrait of Abgar to the icon of Saint John the Baptist from the sixth century (see cat. no. 2). The uncanny resemblance in highlighting, technique, and form supports the debated idea of a "Macedonian Renaissance," in which tenth-century artists deliberately quoted artistic forms and styles of the sixth century. Thus this icon combines a historically and politically nuanced narrative with a timeless and mystical religiosity.

AI

NOTES

1. Weitzmann 1960, p. 166.
2. Cameron 1983, pp. 82–83.
3. Weitzmann 1960, p. 183.
4. Belting 1994, pp. 210–11.
5. Wolf goes so far as to suggest that the painted icon of the Mandylion that was originally between the Sinai wings was sent to Constantinople in 1261 when the city needed an authentic example of the holy icon; Genoa 2004, p. 21.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1960; Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and Radojčić 1967, p. 17, fig. 31; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 94–98; Mouriki 1990; Belting 1994, pp. 211–12, pl. 125; Kessler and Wolf 1998; Rome 2000, pp. 81–82, 92, no. III 3 Peers 2004, pp. 39–40, fig. 32; Genoa 2004, pp. 20–24, fig. 7, p. 34, fig. 6, pp. 81–85, fig. 2

ΙϹ
ΧϹ

7 Codex Theodosianus

ca. 975–1000, Constantinople(?)

Tempera and gold on parchment

Book: 31.9 × 24.1 × 15.6 cm
(12¹⁵⁄₁₆ × 9½ × 6⅛ in.)

CONDITION
Repoussé metal cover over wooden upper board, and red silk brocade over wooden lower board with bosses intact. Covers detached except for single thread at top station at lower board. Later repair to inside of upper board provides rough attachment and obscures figured Byzantine silk fragments. Remnants of woven silk fore-edge ties extant. Textblock consists of very fine parchment with paper strips applied along edges of all folios (later repair). Abrasion and flake losses scattered through each of the illuminations. Gold brilliant throughout with some flake losses.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. 204)

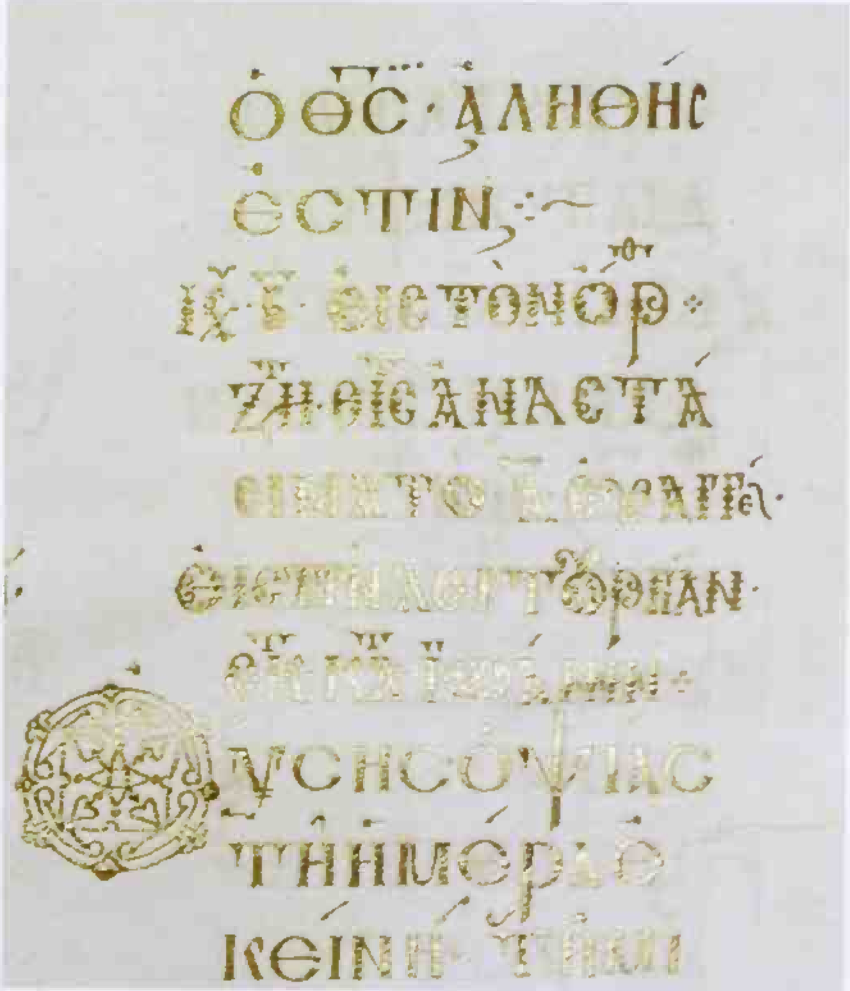
7 (opposite), Christ, p. 1

WHEN THE RUSSIAN SCHOLAR Porfirii Uspenskii (1804–1885) studied the Sinai manuscripts in 1845, he found that four of them, which were considered especially valuable, were kept separately in the archbishop's apartments.[1] One of these was this lectionary, now called the Codex Theodosianus. It is not known how or when the book came to Sinai, where the monks considered it a gift from Emperor Theodosius (the last Byzantine ruler of that name died probably about 754).[2]

A standard lectionary contains passages from the Gospels arranged in the order in which they are read in church during the liturgical year. This volume is exceptional in that it has texts only for select Sundays and for major ecclesiastical holidays,[3] including February 7 and May 10: feasts, respectively, of "our holy father Peter" and of "the dedication of our monastery's church to the Virgin." Other manuscripts list February 7 as the feast day of Saint Peter of Monobata.[4]

The Byzantine convent of Monobata lay "at the farthest confines of the Emperor's lands"[5] and served as a place of exile for Constantinopolitan dignitaries fallen from power, such as Bishop Alexander of Nicaea in 944 or John the Orphanotrophos, brother of Emperor Michael IV, in 1042.[6] The present lectionary is the sole remnant of that monastery, whose very location has been forgotten.[7]

The volume has a copper-gilt front cover that, judging from the style of execution, must have been made in Italy around 1400. It bears Greek inscriptions, which suggests a Greek patron or recipient. The book itself, beautifully



7, detail, p. 47

7 (above), front cover with Crucifixion

7 (above right), back cover

preserved, is a work of great luxury. Its highly stylized script is copied entirely in gold ink and in capital letters. This type of Greek writing, known as majuscule, went out of use around 1000.[8] The style of the book's seven frontispiece miniatures provides further basis for dating: they are comparable to works of the last quarter of the tenth century, most notably the illustrations of a collection of saints' lives and of a psalter that were both made for Emperor Basil II (r. 976–1025).[9]

GRP

NOTES

1. Uspenskii 1856, pp. 225–42. The four manuscripts are London, British Museum, Add. 43725 (known as Codex Sinaiticus), Sinai gr. 204, Sinai gr. 67 (now lost), and Sinai gr. 1186. See also Antonin 1873, pp. 373–74.
2. Uspenskii 1856, p. 239.
3. On the illustration of this type of Gospel lectionary, see Zakharova 2004.
4. Sergii 1901, vol. 2, p. 37.
5. Alexander of Nicaea, cited in I. Ševčenko 1980, p. 738.
6. On the exile of Alexander of Nicaea, see Darrouzès 1960, pp. 28, 67; on that of John the Orphanotrophos, see Thurn 1973, p. 416.
7. On the monastery's probable location, see Markopoulos 2000, p. 54*n. 52.
8. Cavallo 1977, pp. 108–9.
9. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1613, known as the Vatican Menologion; Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. gr. 17 (on the two see Venice 1998, pp. 125, 149–58, nos. 6–7, with bibliog.).

REFERENCES

Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, pp. 42–47, no. 18 (with bibliog.), pls. xlvii–lvi, and pls. iii–viii; Galavaris 1995, pp. 348–50, figs. 15, 16; Weitzmann 1996, pp. 28–29, figs. 209, 211–12, and vol. 2, pp. 36, 88, fig. 670; Panagiotes L. Vokotopoulos in Athens 2002, pp. 416–17, no. 157.

7. Saint Peter of Monobata, p. 3

ΜΡ
ΘΥ

8 Mosaic Icon of the Virgin Hodegetria

Late twelfth/early thirteenth century

Glass and ceramic tesserae on panel

47.3 × 33.7 × 2.5 cm (17⅝ × 13¼ × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED
ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God)

CONDITION
Large loss on left side (including sections of Christ's halo, shoulder, right arm, and tunic) has been filled in and inpainted. Tesserae set into an engaged walnut frame. Patterns of nail holes can be seen on beveled edge of frame.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS MOSAIC ICON OF THE MOTHER AND CHILD displays the quintessential image of prayer. The free hands of the two figures are engaged in a silent dialogue; the Mother presents the prayers of the viewer, while Christ offers blessing as a sign of divine benevolence. The Logos, or Word, is shown in two different forms: as flesh (a physical child) in his mother's arms and as text, symbolized by the scroll in Christ's hand.[1]

Although the composition purports to reproduce the standard Dexiokratousa type (Mary holding the very stately, imperial child in her right arm), several subtle deviations from this model introduce a totally new meaning in the panel: Christ is barefoot; his naked sole is exposed to the viewer; and his blessing gesture, with a thumb pressing the nameless (ring) finger—rather than the archaic configuration (thumb pressing the last two digits)—is directed away from the faithful toward the Mother of God. All three elements emerge in compositions that otherwise proleptically evoke Christ's Crucifixion. The late-twelfth-century fresco of the Virgin Arakiotissa at Lagoudera, Cyprus, offers one of the earliest extant examples (fig. 104).[2] The child's hand gesture and naked sole in the fresco are identical to the ones used in this mosaic icon from Sinai. At the same time, the Lagoudera fresco further strengthens the paschal associations. Christ is cradled in his mother's arms, and two angels floating above carry the instruments (cross and spear) of the Crucifixion. The reclining pose of the child, the vulnerability of his naked feet, and the Passion relics conjure up the image of his future suffering and death on the cross.[3] His blessing hand is turned away from the viewer toward his mother as if he acknowledges the infinite magnitude of Mary's motherly sacrifice.

Figure 104
Virgin Arakiotissa, ca. 1192. Fresco. Panagia tou Arakou, Lagoudera, Cyprus.

The Lagoudera composition is linked to the Constantinopolitan art of the late Comnenian period, yet it appears to have avid following in the Crusader production of the thirteenth century.[4] It is the fragility, vulnerability, and psychological complexity of the Lagoudera formula that appeals to Western sensitivity.[5] The Sinai mosaic icon is a hybrid of the stately and emotional modes of representation of the Virgin and Child.[6] Echoes of proleptic suffering and sacrifice ruffle the otherwise calm surface of these imperial figures. In what follows I will bring up a few more features that hint at a Crusader rather than a Constantinopolitan attribution for this icon.

While the Virgin is identified with the *siglae* "Mother of God" set in red medallions, the abbreviated initials of Christ are absent. This discrepancy—paired with the fact that Christ and Mary do not direct their gaze at the viewer—suggests a non-Constantinopolitan production. In Byzantine icons of the Virgin and Child, at least one of the two sacred figures usually directly engages the viewer.[7] This interactive model is lost in the Sinai panel. Instead, the image displays a pictorial space that excludes the spectator but introduces emotional tenderness, which seems to have greatly appealed to Western artists and audiences.[8] The decorative motifs in the background and frame lend further support for a Crusader attribution. They appropriate Byzantine patterns, but modify them; the crenellated design uses only half of the regular Byzantine stepped-cross pattern, and the morphed acanthus rinceaux transform the standard design.[9] The Sinai mosaic icon is thus most likely the product of a Crusader (Venetian?) artist who was fascinated both with the psychological depth of a few new Byzantine iconographic formulas of the Virgin and Child and with the splendidly adorned Constantinopolitan state icons such as the Hodegetria.[10] He created a Western hybrid, fusing Byzantine imperial art with the emotionally rich images of the liturgical rite.

BP

NOTES

1. Pentcheva 2006a, pp. 114–16.
2. Nicolaïdès 1996, p. 111 n. 985 (with bibliog.).
3. Belting 1994, pp. 287–90, fig. 176; Belting 1990, pp. 117–19, fig. 66.
4. New York 2004, pp. 357–58, 468–70, 480, nos. 216, 278, 279, 289. I thank Anthony Cutler for this suggestion. A Cypriot icon of the late thirteenth century exhibits very similar iconography (see London 2000, pp. 154–55, no. 22). N. P. Kondakov also suggests the possibility of a Western provenance for the Sinai mosaic icon, comparing it to the panels of the Madonna at Alatri and at Grottaferrata: Kondakov in Beneševič 1925, pp. 28–30, pl. 19.
5. A. W. Carr (2004, p. 279) has presented a similar case of Western artists' preference for Byzantine formulas exploring Mary's maternity rather than her stately demeanor (the latter more prominent in the Constantinopolitan tradition). Similarly, it is the Byzantine emotional image types, such as the Eleousa Virgin or the Christ as the Man of Sorrows, that are most avidly appropriated in the West; see Belting 1990, pp. 131–89. The same preference for the Byzantine emotional models over the stately image types is also characteristic of the Slavic, especially Russian, tradition.
6. For the icons' use of hybrid compositions and visual quotations to conjure up a series of complex associations, see Pentcheva 2006a.
7. See, for instance, Vokotopolous 1995, nos. 3, 22, 25, 45, 53, 67, 75, 99.
8. See note 5. In addition, see also the Western examples in Belting 1990, figs. 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 19, 81, 83.
9. Both patterns compromise the standard Byzantine designs as seen in the enamel icon of the archangel Michael, which was brought to San Marco in Venice and refashioned by local craftsmen in the wake of the fourth Crusade. This icon also exhibits thirteenth-century Venetian acanthus rinceaux strips; New York 1984, pp. 141–47, no. 12, and pp. 258–63, no. 36 (for Venetian rinceaux). For the Crusader artists' imitation of enamel revetments, see Frinta 1981. For Crusader icons produced in Acre, see Weitzmann 1963 and Folda 2005.
10. The Hodegetria was splendidly decorated with enameled revetments, gems, pearls, and silk veils; see Pentcheva 2006a, pp. 109–43.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 71, and vol. 2, pp. 85–87; Demus 1991, pp. 51–55, no. 10; Vokotopoulos 1995, pp. 207–8, no. 7; Lidov 1999, pp. 76–77, no. 19, with earlier Russian literature; Edmund C. Ryder in New York 2004, pp. 348–49, no. 207.

8 (opposite), detail

9 Virgin Hodegetria

ca. 1250s, Saint-Jean d'Acre(?)

Tempera and silver leaf with pigmented glazes over gesso and parchment on panel

24.8 × 17.8 × 1.6 cm (9¾ × 7 × ⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED

I(ησοῦ)C X(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ);
M(ήτη)P Θ(εο)Y (Mother of God)

CONDITION

Relief design in background created by applying thick drops of preparation material over panel and carving swirled forms. Silver leaf applied over the relief pattern. Selected areas of background contain red glaze. Engaged frame created by adding strips of parchment to the front of the panel and then adding preparation layer. Entire bottom edge has been lost. Large split in panel runs through Christ child.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS SMALL VIRGIN HODEGETRIA DEXIOKRATOUSA, in which the Christ child sits on the Virgin's right arm, belongs to a group of images made during the mid-thirteenth century and attributed to the city of Acre.[1] It fits within the production of Crusader ateliers working in what has been called the Franco-Byzantine style, practiced by painters trained in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and familiar with Western and Byzantine iconography and style.[2] This Acre group is characterized by brightly highlighted faces, bulging eyes, pearl-like halo borders, and gilded, gesso relief, or *pastiglia*, which covers the background and frame and may have developed in imitation of Byzantine repoussé metal icon covers (see detail, below). Similar gesso ornamentation occurs in images made on Cyprus, but this formulation of foliate spirals around small dots seems limited to the Acre group and is so consistent and distinctive that it may be the hallmark of a single atelier.[3] Indeed, although Jaroslav Folda and others have argued that several related manuscript and icon ateliers were active in mid-thirteenth-century Acre, their production remains difficult to separate.

Among the icons with *pastiglia* decoration are several image types, including a Saint George on horseback, in London, and the wings of a Sinai triptych with the Virgin and Child with angels framed by four scenes from the life of the Virgin.[4] Closest in style to the present Virgin Hodegetria is a slightly larger Sinai panel depicting the Virgin of the Burning Bush between Moses and Elijah, accompanied by Saint Gregory Nazianzenus (or Saint Nicholas; fig. 105).[5] This image connects its atelier to the *locus sanctus* of Sinai, for pilgrimage to the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai included visits to sites of veneration for Moses and Elijah and to the Chapel of the Burning Bush. While it is possible that painters from the atelier were active at Sinai, it is more likely that such images with these two prophets were made at Acre for personal devotion, perhaps in anticipation of pilgrimage. Similarly, although Kurt Weitzmann noted its resemblance to a Byzantine mosaic icon at Sinai, this small Hodegetria was most likely intended originally for personal devotion and subsequently offered as a votive gift on a visit to Sinai, perhaps as a donation to the Chapel of Saint Catherine of the Franks.[6]

RWC

NOTES

1. Folda 2005, pp. 327–31.
2. Folda 2005, pp. 282–359.
3. Papageorgiou 1970, figs. 27, 37.
4. Jaroslav Folda in New York 1997a, p. 393, no. 261; Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, pp. 357–59, no. 216.
5. Weitzmann et al. 1982, pp. 203, 217–18; Folda 2005, fig. 182.
6. Weitzmann et al. 1982, p. 203.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1963, pp. 199–201, fig. 22; Weitzmann et al. 1982, pp. 203, 219; Frinta 1983, pp. 147–67, fig. 4; Folda 1992, pp. 110–12, fig. 105; Folda 2005, pp. 327–29, 532, fig. 181.

9, reverse

9, detail of frame

Figure 105 (right)
Virgin of the Burning Bush between Moses, Elijah, and Saint Gregory Nazianzenus (or Saint Nicholas), ca. 1250s. Tempera and metal leaf on gesso and wood, 32.3 × 25.7 cm (12¾ × 10⅛ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

10 Saint John the Baptist with Scenes from His Life

Early thirteenth century, Balkans(?)

Tempera and gold leaf on panel

41.1 × 32.2 × 2.1 cm (16 13/16 × 12 11/16 × 13/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Top left: Η CΙΛΗΨΙC (Conception); top center: Η [Βάπ]ΤΙCΙC (Baptism); Ο Α(γιος) ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΠΡΟΔΡ(ο)ΜΟC (Saint John the Forerunner); on the purple scroll carried by John: Ἴδε ὁ Ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου (Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world [JOHN 1:29]); behind John: Ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τοῦ δένδρου κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸ[ν] ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. (And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire [MATT. 3:10; LUKE 3:9]); above John's severed head:

ὁρᾷς ὅσα πράττουσιν ὦ Θεοῦ λόγε· οἱ τοὺς ἐλεγμοὺς μὴ φέροντες τοῦ σκότους· ἰδοὺ γὰρ οὗτοι τὴν ἐμὴν ταύτην καραν· κρύπτουσιν εἰς γῆν τῷ ξίφει τετμηκότες· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ α[ὐ]τὴν ἐξ ἀφανοῦς τοῦ τόπου· εἰς φῶς ἐπανήγαγες οἷς οἶδας τρόπ[ο]ις· οὕτως δυσωπῶ σῶσον αὐτοὺς εν βίω· τοὺς τὴν ἐμὴν σεβοντας σεπτὴν εἰκόνα. (You see what they do, O Word of God; those who do not bear the refutations of their darkness. For, behold, they cover this head of mine in the earth, having cut it off with a sword. But since you have returned it from its hidden place, into the light by means which you know, so I beg you preserve those in life, who reverence my venerable icon.)[1]

CONDITION

Figures painted on an off-white background; yellow discolored varnish covers entire icon. Gold leaf applied to selected areas including haloes, ax handle, staff and text. Large loss to panel at upper left. Reverse: striped design over white preparatory layer

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

ARRANGED AROUND A PAINTED TREFOIL ARCH, this icon portrays John the Baptist addressing a prayer to Christ. This icon is unusual in its use of this painted frame, the blue line that delineates and decorates the interior field, and apparent variation in the ground (with gold reserved for framing images rather than the white ground on which John stands).

The predominant image shows John offering a prayer to Christ, who responds while looking up to the central image of the Baptism above. The Virgin Mary is also incorporated into this exchange, as she is shown holding a cloth, which she appears to offer to John. The two upper roundels show the miraculous origins of the Baptist. These images of the Annunciation to Zacharias and John's nativity echo similar themes found in the depictions of Christ's life.

This complex icon offers a number of overlapping themes. In the first instance, John is identified as the last prophet (the Forerunner) who identifies Christ as the Lamb of God. This utterance is inscribed in gold on the purple scroll. Its presence here calls attention to the shift from verbal prophecy to the actual eyewitness that the Incarnation made possible.

The implications of this shift are then developed in the two lengthy inscriptions found on either side of John, which build on each other both to explain the iconography and to extend our understanding of the icon. The inscription behind John is a direct quote from the Gospel. It is part of a speech directed at the Pharisees and the Sadducees that announces Christ's coming, the changed dispensation that arises from this event, and the beginning of the Judgment itself. The ax and the tree beneath the text remind the reader/viewer of the passage's central metaphor. The second lengthy inscription is an epigram that was perhaps written for this icon. The epigram continues the Baptist's condemnation of those who refuse the consequences of the Incarnation, identifying them with those who have hidden John's head. This head is seen below the inscription, presented in a font that calls attention to the second baptism of John's own martyrdom.[2]

Finally, the epigram introduces those who venerate this icon into John's prayer. In so doing, the text calls attention to the cult paid to this icon, identifying such cult practice as being beneficial to those who participate in it. Their eyewitness is thus accorded a value akin to John's own.

CB

10, reverse

NOTES

1. My transcription of the epigram differs slightly from that found in G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, p. 98, and includes original scribal errors. My translation differs from that found in Walter 2000, p. 316. Thanks to Dave Jenkins for editing my translation of the epigram.
2. Walter 2000, p. 316.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 86, and vol. 2, pp. 98–99; Walter 2000; Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 210–12.

ΟΙ ΑΓΙΟΙ Γ
ΠΑΙΔΕϹ

11 The Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace, Daniel in the Lions' Den

Thirteenth century, Sinai or Palestine

Tempera and gold on panel

41.3 × 34.4 × 1.1 cm (16¼ × 13⁹⁄₁₆ × ⁷⁄₁₆ in.)

INSCRIBED

On the obverse, in twelve-syllable Greek verse: Ἀρθεὶς Ἀμβακούμ, ὡς ὁρᾷς, παρ' ἀγγέλου / τροφὴν κομίζει Δανιὴλ ταχυτάτην (Habakkuk, raised, as you see, by an angel, / carries most swiftly nourishment to Daniel); Ο ΑΡΧ(άγγελος) ΜΙΧ(αήλ) (Archangel Michael); ΟΙ ΑΓΙΟΙ Γ' ΠΑΙΔΕC (The Three Holy Children); ἡ φλὸξ τοῦ πυρὸς φλέγουσα τοὺς Χαλδαίους (The fire's flame burning up the Chaldeans); Εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔργα Κ(υρίο)υ, τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν· ὑμνεῖτ(ε) καὶ ὑπ(ερ)υψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰ(ς) τ(οὺ)ς αἰῶν(ας). Εὐλογεῖτε, ἄγγελοι Κ(υρίο)υ, οὐ(ρα)νοὶ Κ(υρίο)υ, τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν· ὑμνεῖτ(ε) κ(αὶ) ὑπ(ερ)υψοῦτ(ε). Εὐλογεῖτε, πν(εύμ)ατα. Εὐλογεῖτε, Ἀνανία, Ἀζαρία, Μισαήλ, τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν· ὑμνεῖτ(ε) κ(αὶ). Εὐλογεῖτε, ἀπόστολοι, προφῆτ(αι) κὲ μάρτυρες Κ(υρίο)υ, τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν ὑμ(ῶν). (Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord, you heavens of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt. Bless the Lord, spirits. Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael; sing praise and . . . [Apocrypha: Song of the Three Jews 35–37, 64–66] Bless the Lord, apostles, prophets and martyrs of the Lord);[1] on the reverse, in Arabic:

برسم القسيس اكلمي

(painted/commissioned by the priest Aklami)[2]

CONDITION

Gilding has been restricted to the center panel and inner beveled edges; engaged frame is painted. Gilded decoration on costume has been applied with gold leaf over paint. Dark amber-colored varnish appears over the entire surface.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE VERSIFIED INSCRIPTION ON THE LEFT EDGE of this icon addresses the viewer of the adjacent small scene (Apocrypha: Bel and Dragon 31–42), while the opposite side of the frame shows King Nebuchadnezzar viewing the execution he ordered (DAN. 3:8–27).[3] In the center of the panel the three Hebrews are portrayed, according to Byzantine tradition, as beardless youths in Persian costume. In Constantinople, where their bodies were preserved as relics, the miraculous story of the "Holy Children" was reenacted in a semitheatrical manner on their feast day, December 17.[4] It is possible that the present icon was annually displayed in church for veneration on that day,[5] which is also the feast of the prophet Daniel. Images of the three Hebrews and of Daniel with the prophet Habakkuk are often found close to the altar in the wall paintings of Byzantine churches.[6] This panel must have originally hung in a similar position. A 2004 photograph shows it standing on a shelf against the north wall of the Sinai basilica.[7]

The short text in Arabic on the back indicates that the icon was made for a local patron, perhaps at Sinai itself. It is comparable in style to a number of paintings preserved in the monastery, such as the panels with Saints Basil and Chrysostom (cat. nos. 26, 27) or two murals published by Chatzidakis.[8] This group also includes the funerary portrait of Patriarch Euthymios II (cat. no. 53), so it can be dated in its entirety to the thirteenth century.

GRP

NOTES

1. Compare the Holy Transfiguration Monastery translation in *Great Horologion* 1997, pp. 91–92.
2. Transcribed and translated by George Saliba and Linda Komaroff.
3. On the iconography of the two scenes, see Brubaker 1999, pp. 366–70 (with bibliog.); Gabelić 1990, pp. 87–89 (with bibliog.).
4. Catherine Brown Tkacz, John H. Lowden, and Anthony Cutler in *ODB*, s.v. "Three Hebrews" (with bibliog.).
5. On this custom at Sinai in the late sixteenth century, see Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 19, lines 476–80; compare also Lazarev 1977, pp. 50–51 n. 4, pl. v.
6. Klaus Wessel in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, s.v. "Daniel," and "Jünglinge im Feuerofen."
7. Photograph in Evans 2004, p. 54.
8. M. Chatzidakis 1970–72, pp. 225–28, pls. 83, 84.

REFERENCE

N. Nikolaïdis, cited in Rabino 1935, p. 47, and in Rabino 1938, p. 59.

11, detail of reverse, with Arabic inscription

Ο ΑΡ
ΜΙ

12 Archangel Michael with Donor Monk

Early thirteenth century, Sinai

Tempera and gold on panel

41.8 × 28.3 × 2.7 cm (16 7/16 × 11 1/8 × 1 1/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

O APX(ἄγγελος) MIX(αήλ) (Archangel Michael)

CONDITION

Good condition. Scattered losses over entire panel with larger losses in the drapery of the angel Michael and foreground. Chrysography created with cut gold leaf. Gold restricted to inner panel and beveled edge. Traces of preparation layer overlapping frame indicate loss of an original surface. Frame overpainted in blue followed by yellow paint. Discolored and uneven varnish layers.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS ICON OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL is one of eight icons produced at Sinai that depict a monk offering particular devotion to a given saint.[1] This example shares many of the features of this group, including the relatively diminished scale of the anonymous monk and the visible veneration performed by this presumed donor.

The archangel Michael was a very important saint in Byzantium.[2] Two feast days were associated with him—September 8, when the miracle at his cult center at Chonae in western Asia Minor was celebrated, and November 8, when the archangels were celebrated together. Furthermore, angels in general were idealized models for the bodiless spirituality sought in monastic practice and clerical ideology.[3] While a particular Sinai connotation might be suggested from the mention of the archangel Michael in the Epistle of Jude (verse 9), when Jude notes that Michael disputed with the devil over the body of Moses, the image seen here does not make such a link. Rather, this icon offers an image of intercession. Michael is not shown in the court costume in which he is often represented. Rather, he wears a purple tunic with a deep blue himation (mantle). Only the red shoes, reserved for the Byzantine emperor, point to his high status. Michael stands in a barely defined landscape, knees bent and body stooped. His eyes look up at an unseen object, and his hands are covered by the folds of his himation. For those acquainted with Byzantine iconography, this pose has two associations: the angels at Christ's baptism, who hold the clothes that he will wear after he emerges from the Jordan, and the participants at the Divine Liturgy, who receive the Eucharist with covered hands. In the icon, the covered hands of the archangel may indicate that he is to be the recipient of a sacred gift from an unseen God, the divine grace that the donor-monk has sought through Michael's mediation.

CB

NOTES

1. Mouriki 1995, pp. 110, 129–34.
2. C. Mango 1984; Peers 2001, pp. 157–93.
3. An important visual example of this commonplace monastic thought is to be found in the image of Neophytos between Archangels in the Enkleistra of Neophytos on Cyprus, painted in 1183; Cormack 1985, pp. 215–51.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 159, and vol. 2, p. 139; C. Mango 1984; Mouriki 1995, pp. 110, 129–34; Peers 2001, pp. 157–93.

Ο ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΣ

13 Annunciation

Late twelfth century, Sinai or Constantinople

Tempera and gold on panel

63.1 × 42.2 × 3.2 cm (24 13/16 × 16 5/8 × 1 1/4 in.)

INSCRIBED
Ο ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙCΜΟC (Annunciation)

CONDITION
Very good condition. Dove symbolizing holy spirit painted directly over ground layer. Background details painted in heavy brown paint. Incised halos around figures of Gabriel, dove, and God. Shaft of light was created with shallow incised lines and then burnished. Very uneven varnish layer. Engaged frame appears to have been gilded originally; orange and aqua overpaint at top and bottom edges. On reverse, painted treatment directly on panel; extensive loss to paint.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

13, detail

SWATHED IN ELEGANTLY AGITATED DRAPERY, the angel Gabriel announces the news of the birth of Christ. The ornamentally mannered drapery and serpentine twisting of the angel, characteristic of the late Comnenian style, echo the jagged coastline below and contrast with the calm figure of the Virgin, who interrupts her spinning, turns toward the angel, and responds in a gesture of speech. Although described by Weitzmann as a "frail maiden,"[1] Mary neither shrinks from the messenger nor raises her hand in fear, like the Virgin of the iconostasis doors (cat. no. 22). The purple wool dangling from the Virgin's left hand touches a faint grisaille mandorla that contains a ghost image of the Christ child.[2] Such a representation might be expected over Mary's womb, but here it falls on the Virgin's right breast. Apparently the artist seeks to capture the moment when the Holy Spirit, descending along a burnished ray of gold in the form of a dove, floats into Mary's body. Yet because the inscription labels the scene as the Annunciation, the icon is also meant to evoke the entire narratological event, not merely one moment within it. The Byzantine viewer's associations with the icon and event have been understood through Byzantine homilies and the early Byzantine Akathistos Hymn.[3]

The temporally and spatially synthetic organization of the icon emphasizes the contrast and antithesis inherent in this event. The angel delivers the Word of God, which arrives both as a dove and as a child. Mary, a humble woman spinning wool, is also the Mother of God sitting on a bejeweled throne. The dynamic wildlife indicates the springtime, while the golden ground creates a timeless setting. Mary sits in front of a house replete with pilasters, arcades, tiled roofs, and a rooftop garden, but the setting is both rural and urban. The imaginative setting may relate to the place of production. Mouriki argues that both this icon and the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus (see cat. no. 48) were painted by the same Constantinopolitan artist at Sinai.[4] Much like the landscape depicted in the Annunciation icon, the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai is a dense complex of urban structures located near a bountiful oasis, yet set within the limitless and faceless space of a desert.

AL

NOTES
1. Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and Radojčić 1967, p. 26.
2. This unusual presentation of the Christ child does appear in other instances, including an early Coptic icon (Morey 1942, p. 81), a twelfth-century Russian icon (Schiller 1971, fig. 98), and later western European paintings, including a work by Paolo Veneziano (see Schiller 1971, Type 5 Venice 1; and Shorr 1954, figs. 113, 142). This placement of the Christ child over the Virgin's womb is also related to the Virgin Blachernitissa type.
3. Maguire 1981, p. 45.
4. Mouriki 1990, p. 108.

REFERENCES
Weitzmann 1965; Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and Radojčić 1967, p. 26, fig. 54; Weitzmann 1978, pp. 19–21, pl. 27; Maguire 1981, pp. 48–51, pl. 42; Maguire 1983; Mouriki 1990, pp. 107–8, 160, fig. 29; Belting 1994, pp. 278–79, pl. 167; Annemarie Weyl Carr in New York 1997a, pp. 374–75, no. 246; Cormack 2000b, p. 42, fig. 4; Peers 2004, p. 103, fig. 67.

14 | Scenes of the Nativity

Eleventh century, Constantinople(?)

Tempera and metal leaf (probably gold) with pigmented varnish on panel

36.3 × 21.6 × 1.6 cm (14⁵⁄₁₆ × 8½ × ⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED

Η Χ(ριστο)Υ ΓΕΝΝΕCΙC (The Birth of Christ); ΟΙ ΜΑΓΟΙ ΟΔΗΓΟΥΜΕΝΟΙ ΥΠΟ ΑCΤΕΡΟC (The Magi led by the star); Η ΠΡΟCΚΥΝΕCΙC ΤΩΝ ΜΑΓΩΝ (The *proskynesis* of the Magi); ΔΙ' ΑΛΛΗC ΟΔΟΥ ΑΝΕΧΩΡΗCΑΝ (They leave by another route); ΙΩCΗΦ ΥΙΕ ΔΑΒΙΔ ΜΗ ΦΟΒΟΥ ΠΑΡΑΛΑΒΕΙΝ ΜΑΡΙΑΝ ΤΗΝ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΑ CΟΥ (Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Maria as your wife); Η ΦΥΓΗ ΤΗC ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ ΕΙC ΑΙΓΥΠΤΟΝ (The flight of the Theotokos into Egypt); Η ΦΥΓΗ ΤΗC Α(γίας) ΕΛΙCΑΒΕΤ (The flight of St. Elizabeth); ΗΡΟΔΗC (Herod); Η ΑΝΑΙΡΕCΙC ΤΩΝ ΒΡΕΦΩΝ (The slaughter of the innocents); ΡΑΧΗΛ ΚΛΑΙΟΥCΑ ΤΑ ΤΕΚΝΑ ΑΥΤΗC (Rachel mourning her children)[1]

CONDITION

Very good condition. Figural details created with cut gold leaf. Uneven varnish layer with slight losses. Losses to engaged frame. Reverse: striped design over white preparatory layer with fragments of canvas backing applied later.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS SMALL, NARROW PANEL, formerly part of a diptych, presents a remarkably elaborate cycle of the birth and infancy of Christ.[2] The birth of Christ is strongly emphasized, in the scale of the central scene and in the strong, arresting colors in this passage. Around this essential core of incarna-tional theology made visible, other scenes lay out cosmic and terrestrial repercussions of the event. At the top of the panel, a choir of angels parts to celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit. Other scenes from the infancy tradition fill the remainder of the icon, and the lack of logic in spatial relations and chronological sequence here offers rich associations for viewers. The bottom register shows the Massacre of the Innocents, in which Herod himself actively participates. Connected to it are the scenes of the advent of the Magi, their adoration of the baby Jesus, and their departure by a different route home, shown in the upper right- and left-hand corners. Scenes derived from apocryphal Gospels are depicted in the central portion of the icon.[3] Right above the massacre, Elizabeth hides with her son, John the Baptist, in a miraculously opened cave that allows them to escape Herod's soldier. Directly connected to the birth of Christ are the scenes immediately below the cave, where Christ is washed by the two midwives; in an unusual scene below at the viewer's left, Joseph's son (Joseph himself in the apocryphal texts) leads the two midwives to the cave.[4] The angel appears to Joseph just above this scene. At the center the midwives bathe the child, and, below this the Holy Family is shown entering Egypt. The family is accompanied by a son of Joseph and welcomed by a personification of the city of Alexandria.

The organization and selection of scenes form a densely packed and visually intense composition that narrates the early history of God as man.[5] The sources for the images in this icon may well have been manuscript illuminations, such as the eleventh-century Gospels in Paris (gr. 74), but in the late Byzantine period such arrangements became common in extensive monumental fresco cycles.[6]

GP

14, reverse

NOTES

1. From G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–59, vol. 2, pp. 59–62, with changes. Translated by Catie Mihalopoulos.
2. The iconography is extensively treated in Stichel 1990.
3. For example, Hennecke and Schneemelcher 1963–66, vol. 1, and Tischendorf 1876.
4. On this tradition, see Deshman 1989.
5. The icon was originally paired with another panel, *olim* Kiev, that together made up a diptych. That panel had scenes of the baptism of Christ and his temptation in the desert. Any full reading of the Nativity icon needs to take into account its equally rich complement, which exists only in black-and-white photographs. The pairing was noted in Weitzmann 1982b, p. 431 (annotations to no. VIII, p. 21 n. 5), and discussed more recently in Etingof 2005, pp. 645–48.
6. See Drandaki 2002, pp. 24–35.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 43–45, and vol. 2, pp. 59–62; Weitzmann et al. 1966, p. 13, pl. 23.

680.

15 | Crucifixion with Deesis and Saints

ca. 1250s, Saint-Jean d'Acre or Sinai

Tempera and gold on panel

37.5 × 27.3 × 2.3 cm (14 ¾ × 10 ¾ × 15/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

On the *titulus*: Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστὸ)C Ο ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΤΗC ΔΟΞΗC (Jesus Christ, the King of Glory); top row: Ο ΠΡ(οφήτης) ΗΛΗΑC (Elijah); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟC (Saint John the Baptist); Ο ΠΡΟΦ(ήτης) ΜΟCΗC (Prophet Moses); left column: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΠΕΤΡΟC (Saint Peter); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟC (Saint George); Ο Α(γιος) ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΧΡ(υσόστομος) (Saint John Chrysostom); Η ΑΓΙΑ ΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ (Saint Catherine); bottom row: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΜΑΞΗΜΟC (Saint Maximus the Confessor); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΠΑΒΛΟC (Saint Paul of Thebes); Ο (ἅγιος) CΗΜΕΟΝ ΤΟΥ CΤΙΛΙΤΟΥ (Saint Symeon Stylites); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΟΝΟΥΦΡΗΟC (Saint Onufrius); right column below Moses: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΠΑΥΛΟC (Saint Paul); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC (Saint Theodore); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΒΑCΗΛΙΟC (Saint Basil); Η ΑΓΙΑ ΗΡΗΝΗ (Saint Irene); Ο (ἅγιος) ΔΟΜΕΝΤΗΟC (Saint Dometius)[1]

CONDITION

Entire surface of panel covered with gold leaf before painting. Paint films have flaked off to reveal gold background throughout. Uneven varnish. Painting has engaged frame with grooves running down entire right and left edges of panel. Fragment of wood in left groove suggests panel was once displayed in frame.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

FRAMED BY BUST-LENGTH FIGURES of the Deesis (Christ, the Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist), the prophets Elijah and Moses, and thirteen other saints, this Crucifixion is central to discussions of painting in the thirteenth-century Mediterranean basin. This icon has been convincingly placed among manuscripts, icons, and frescoes produced by ateliers working in the Crusader capital at Acre in styles that combine aspects of Byzantine painting with Western iconography and style and are characterized by distinctive, bulging eyes.[2] Localized to Acre by a notation in a missal now in Perugia, their activity is dated to the middle of the thirteenth century by the presence of Louis IX of France in Acre between 1250 and 1254. (The most spectacular of the manuscripts, the Arsenal Bible, was probably made for Louis IX.)[3]

Among the works attributed to the atelier, our image finds a close match in the Crucifixion of the Perugia Missal.[4] The two share facial and hair types, the Virgin's gesture (turning her thumb up to her mouth), and Saint John's gesture (touching his eye and mouth). These motifs appear elsewhere, most significantly in the immense triptych made for the Franciscans at Perugia and in a double-sided icon on Sinai, as well as in other Crusader images.[5] The frantically mourning angels are also present in the double-sided icon and in Italian panel paintings and frescoes. Like chrysography, these shared motifs highlight the connections between Byzantine, Armenian, Italian, and Crusader painting. Still, the presence of the prophets Elijah and Moses and Saints Catherine, Symeon Stylites, and Onufrius, all venerated at Sinai, point to its association with the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai. Moreover, the two closest parallels for this framed Crucifixion are at Sinai. One is attributed to Constantinople just before 1200 (fig. 106);[6] the other, probably by another Acre painter, may have been inspired by our image.[7] Like the references among the saints, this familiarity with other Sinai images raises the possibility that some Acre painters were working in the vicinity of Saint Catherine's. At the very least, such images were intended for the veneration of—as well as at—the holy site, for preparation for pilgrimage there, or as votive gifts to the monastery.

RWC

Figure 106
Crucifixion with Deesis Surrounded by Saints, ca. 1200. Tempera on wood. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

NOTES

1. Weitzmann et al. 1982, p. 202.
2. Folda 2005, pp. 282–336; Weitzmann 1963, pp. 179–203; Amy Neff in New York 2004, pp. 463–65, no. 274.
3. Buchthal 1957, pp. 47–68. Helen C. Evans in New York 2004, pp. 462–63, no. 272.
4. Rebecca W. Corrie in New York 2004, pp. 466–67, no. 276.
5. Rebecca W. Corrie in New York 2004, pp. 481–82, no. 290; Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, pp. 366–67, no. 223.
6. Annemarie Weyl Carr in New York 1997a, pp. 372–73, no. 245.
7. Folda 2005, pp. 535, 538, fig. 365.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1963, pp. 180–81, fig. 1; Weitzmann 1966b, pp. 56–58, fig. 3; Weitzmann et al. 1982, pp. 202, 211–14; Folda 2005, pp. 281–308, 535, 548, fig. 152.

530

16 Saint George with Scenes from His Life

Early fifteenth century(?), Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

44.1 × 33.4 × 2.5 cm (17⅜ × 13³⁄₁₆ × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

On center panel: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟC (Saint George); at bottom left: ΠΟΙΜΕΝ ΜΟΝΑΧΟC (Pimen the Monk); on outer frame, top: Ο Α(γιος) ΔΙΔΟΝ ΤΟ ΨΥΧΙΚΟΝ (The saint giving a pious donation); Ο Α(γιος) ICΤΑΜΕΝΟC ΕΙC ΤΟΝ ΒΑCΙΛΕΑ (The saint standing before the emperor); Ο Α(γιος) ΤΗΠΤΟΜΕΝΟC (The saint being beaten); Ο Α(γιος) ΛΙΘΟ ΒΑΡΙΝΟΜΕΝΟC (The saint being weighed down by a stone); on outer frame, right: Ο Α(γιος) ΕΝ ΤΟ ΤΡΟΧΩ (The saint on the wheel); Ο Α(γιος) ΡΥΟΜΕΝΟC ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΟΧΟΥ ΥΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΥ (The saint being saved from the wheel by the angel); Ο Α(γιος) ΕΒΑΛΗΘΗ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΑCΒΕCΤΩ (The saint has been thrown into quicklime); on outer frame, left: Ο Α(γιος) ΔΕΡ-ΝΟΜΕΝΟC (The saint being flayed); Ο Α(γιος) ΚΕΙΟΜΕΝΟC ΜΕΤΑ CΙΔΙΡΩΝ (The saint being burned by irons); Ο Α(γιος) ΑΝΙCΤΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΝΕΚΡΟΝ (The saint raising the dead man); on outer frame, bottom: Ο Α(γιος) ΑΝΙCΤΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΒΟΥΝ (The saint raising the ox); Ο Α(γιος) ΚΑΤΕΑΖΟΝ ΤΑ ΕΙΔΩΛΑ (The saint destroying idols); Ο Α(γιος) ΞΙΦΙ ΤΕΛΙΟΥΤΕ (The saint is killed by a sword); Ο Α(γιος) ΕΝΤΑΦΙΑΖΟΜΕΝΟC (The saint being buried)

CONDITION

Uneven and discolored varnish layer(s), fine craqueleur over entire surface. Cleaning test on lower left removed uppermost layer(s) of varnish, revealing original surface. Halo of Saint George incised with double contour. Architectural details and figures incised loosely into background (often painted layers do not follow incision marks precisely). Frame is made up of strips of wood attached to panel; cracks appear at the interface at top and bottom. Crack in center of panel runs through the arm of Saint George.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS POPULAR MARTYR AND MILITARY SAINT,[1] revered by the Crusaders,[2] is depicted in the center of the panel in armor, wielding a lance and shield. A monk crouches in the gesture of supplication at his right foot, thus tying the icon to monastic patronage.[3] George's splendidly robust figure is offset by its miniature version depicted all around the frame, working miracles and suffering martyrdom in episodes of his life.[4] In these, his depiction varies in narrative context and gesture, thus challenging the magnified, central image and revealing its varied manifestations on the frame.[5] In this respect, narrative icons of saints force a reconsideration of their perceived static qualities. The juxtaposition of distinct images of George on the same panel reinforces the distinct visual identities a saint could assume on an icon, as in life.[6]

Narrative icons resemble templon beams, which usually depict a Deesis framed on either side by the liturgical life cycle of Christ.[7] Similarly, the monk on this icon visually enacts the process of witness and supplication, while the life cycle of George unfolds around them. This icon probably received special attention on George's feast day when the visualized life might have complemented the reading of his vita.[8] If placed in front of the iconostasis, it may have evoked the arrangement of the templon beam above and behind it and thus would have been a visual counterpart to the depiction of Christ himself.[9] The smaller scale of the narrative scenes invites the venerator to step closer, eliciting more intimate interaction with the panel. Narrative icons thus enhance the visual performance of devotion within the broader, architectural space of the church.

PC

NOTES

1. For a comprehensive survey of the textual tradition, cults, and depictions of Saint George and his life, see Mark-Weiner 1977. For the relative popularity of George on fresco cycles, see Gouma-Peterson 1985.
2. On Saint George in Crusader art, see Cormack and Mihalarias 1984. For military saints, see Walter 2003. For devotion to military saints during the Crusades, see Gerstel 2001. See also Hunt 1991.
3. G. Sotirion and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 154–55. The Sotirious attribute the icon to monastic technique as well, claiming that the monk Pimen painted it, and identify him with the same figure that supplicates to Saint Nicholas on a fifteenth-century icon at the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai. The decoration on the border separating the frame from the center on this icon resembles that on the Nicholas icon, so the provenance of both from the same workshop is highly probable. Precedents exist for the monastic patronage of military saints such as George. A thirteenth-century narrative icon of the saint, located at Sinai, contains a depiction of John the Iberian, a monk and priest, and donor of the icon. See Mouriki 1995, no. 7.
4. On the corporeality of military saints in Byzantine art, see Maguire 1996, pp. 48–99.
5. Glenn Peers discusses the dialectics of center and frame and the saint's magnified presence vis-à-vis his brutalized body in relation to an icon of Saint George from Kastoria, now in the Byzantine Museum in Athens in Peers 2004, pp. 77–99.
6. Other narrative icons of Saint George combine different media; see New York 1997a, pp. 299–300, no. 202; Peers 2004, pp. 79–80.
7. N. P. Ševčenko 1992. On the "genre" of narrative icons, see N. P. Ševčenko 1999.
8. Unfortunately, little is known about the mechanics of the reading of "vitae," but a short reading from the *synaxarion* probably occured on the specific saint's feast day.
9. The author is preparing a study of the physical space in which the narrative icons functioned in her Ph.D. dissertation (University of Chicago), titled "Narrating Sanctity: The Rhetoric of Representation in Byzantine and Italian Narrative Icons."

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 169, and vol. 2, pp. 154–55; Mark-Weiner 1977, pp. 81–82, fig. 53.

Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ
ΝΙΚΟ ΛΑΟΣ

17 Saint Nicholas with Scenes from His Life

Thirteenth century, Sinai(?)

Tempera and gold over textile on panel

44.1 × 33.7 × 2.9 cm (17⅜ × 13¼ × 1⅛ in.)

INSCRIBED

On center panel: O ΑΓΙΟC ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟC (Saint Nicholas); at bottom left: ΚΛΗΜΟC (Klimos); right: ΠΗΜΗΝ (Pimen); inner frame: each episode of Nicholas's life; outer frame: names of the saints

CONDITION

Excellent condition. Figures painted directly on white preparation layer. Cut gold leaf applied for costume details. Halos incised into gilded background. Frame is made up of strips of wood attached to panel. Horizontal cracks have developed along interface of strips with panel. Textile appears to go over front edge of frame. Frame was painted black, then gilded; now covered with layers of blue and red paint.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

SAINT NICHOLAS'S INTERCESSORY POWERS were renowned in Byzantium.[1] Appropriately, this icon amplifies the themes of intercession and supplication within the specific context of Sinai.[2] The central portrait positions Nicholas between Christ and the Virgin, who, by anointing him, attest to his sanctity. Two monks—Klimos and Pimen—the probable donors of the icon, appear on either side of Nicholas in an attitude of prayer.[3] Their gesture, along with the depiction of Nicholas's life, furnishes an ideal for a monk to aspire to, if not in literal terms, then in the saint's assimilation to Christ represented directly above Nicholas. There, echoing the scene below, we see Christ enthroned between the Virgin Paraklesis[4] and John the Baptist in the format of the Deesis, the symbol of witness and supplication.[5] The saints on either side expand the Deesis and include Moses, Aaron, and Elijah. This firmly ties the supplication of the monks Klimos and Pimen to Sinai; they are depicted in eternal time with holy figures from the past, but the site they occupy is specifically referenced. The figures from the past attest to the life of Saint Nicholas, unfolding on the inner frame, just as they attest to the presence of Christ at the top of the panel. Nicholas, in spite of his magnified presence in the center, ultimately takes his place amid this august company.

This panel elaborates on the narrative icon format that scholars believe developed both in Byzantium and the Latin West around the thirteenth century and probably had its origins at Sinai.[6] It borrows extensively from an earlier icon of Nicholas's life located in the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai,[7] which suggests that it may have been created in the monastery itself, hence its emphasis on figures connected to Sinai. The interaction of the center and the frames enables different thematic relationships between its parts.[8] Like the components of an iconostasis, this icon yields a range of visual possibilities through its juxtaposition of portraits and narratives.

PC

NOTES

1. Saint Nicholas is a composite of two different saints—a fourth-century bishop of Myra and Nicholas of Sion. For a life of Nicholas of Sion, see Anrich 1913–17. See also Halkin 1957 for a list of hagiographic texts on Nicholas. For homiletic literature, see Ehrhard 1937–40. Nicholas's success in intercession is well documented by a sixth-century text known as the *Praxis de Stratelatis*, dated by Anrich to the reign of Justinian. For a comprehensive account of the life of Saint Nicholas as depicted in works of art and a discussion of textual sources, see N. P. Ševčenko 1983.
2. The exact location of the icon in the monastery is unclear since the chapel of Saint Nicholas is now covered by the chapel of Moses and Aaron. N. P. Ševčenko 1983, p. 164.
3. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 155–57. The Sotirious argue that the monks were also the painters of the icon. Although their inscribed names may indicate their status as patrons of the panel, there is little concrete evidence to suggest that the monks actually painted it themselves.
4. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, p. 156. Mouriki 1968; Walter 1980.
5. Literature on the Deesis is burgeoning. For a review, see Cutler 2000.
6. N. P. Ševčenko refers to this format as a convenient vehicle for the depiction of saints venerated by diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups during the Crusader period of the thirteenth century. See N. P. Ševčenko 1999, pp. 162–65. For details on the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai as an important center of icon production in the early thirteenth century, see Weitzmann 1984b.
7. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 155–57. N. P. Ševčenko furnishes details on the earlier icon, which she dates to the late twelfth century. See N. P. Ševčenko 1983, pp. 29–31.
8. For a subtle reading of the relations between center and frame and how they might inflect the subject matter of an icon, see Carr 1993–94.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 170, and vol. 2, pp. 155–57; N. P. Ševčenko 1983, p. 59, fig. 42.

18 | Polyptych with Feast Scenes

Fourteenth century

Tempera and metal leaf (probably gold) on panel

Each panel, respectively:
36 × 27.3 × 1.4 cm (14 3/16 × 10 3/4 × 9/16 in.)
35.9 × 27.6 × 1.4 cm (14 1/8 × 10 7/8 × 9/16 in.)
36 × 28.2 × 1.4 cm (14 3/16 × 11 1/8 × 9/16 in.)
35.9 × 27 × 1.4 cm (14 1/8 × 10 5/8 × 9/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Panel 1: top left: Ο ΧΕΡΕΤΙCΜΟC (The Annunciation); ΑΡΧ(άγγελος) ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ (Archangel Michael); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); top right: Η Χ(ριστο)Υ ΓΕΝΙCΙC (The Birth of Christ); bottom left: Η ΑΠΟΚΑΘΙΛΩCΗC (The Unnailing); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); ΜΗΤ(η)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); bottom right: Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙ(ος) ΘΡΙΝΟ[ς] (The Lamentation over the tomb); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ)

Panel 2: top left: Η ΥΠΑΠΑΝΤΙ (The meeting); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); top right: Η ΒΑΠΤΗCΙC (The Baptism); bottom left: Η ΑΝΑC-ΤΑCΙC (The Anastasis); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); bottom right: Η ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩCΙC (The Transfiguration); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ)

Panel 3: top left: Η ΕΓΕΡCΙC ΤΟΥ ΛΑΖΑΡΟΥ (Resurrection of Lazarus); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); top right: Η ΒΑΥΟΦΩΡΟ(ς) (Carrying palms); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); bottom left: Η ΑΝΑΛΗΨΗC (Ascension); bottom right: Η ΠΕΝΤΙΚΟCΤΗ (Pentecost)

Panel 4: top left: ΕΛΚΩΜΕΝ(ος) ΕΠΙ CΤΑΥΡΟΥ (Being dragged to the cross); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); top right: Η CΤΑΥΡΩCΙC (Crucifixion); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); Ο ΑΓ(ιος) ΙΩ(άννης) (Saint John); bottom left: Η ΚΙΜΗ(σις) ΤΙC Θ(εοτό)ΚΟΥ (The Dormition of the Mother of God); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God) bottom right: Ο ΑΓ(ιος) ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟC (Saint George); Ο ΑΓ(ιος) ΔΙΜΙΤΡΙΟC (Saint Demetrios)

CONDITION

Paint layer in excellent condition overall. Scattered losses to surface reveal white preparation layer beneath. Thin varnish layer only slightly yellowed. Lower right corner of reverse of panel has female figure drawn in black and red liquid medium. Engaged frame; arched border of each image also carved out of panel. Panels presently held together with three eye-hooks along edges.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

POLYPTYCHS WITH MULTIPLE FEAST SCENES are well attested at the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai. A four-panel icon from the twelfth century represents the twelve major feasts of the year, the Dodekaorton: Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, Baptism, Transfiguration, Resurrection of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem, Crucifixion, Anastasis, Ascension, Pentecost, and Dormition of the Mother of God.[1] By the fourteenth century, this series had become canonical and appears on a miniature mosaic icon in Florence, a polyptych with six wings at Sinai, and other icons at the monastery.[2] By encapsulating the program of the templon beam (see, for example, cat. no. 20), such portable icons render any space sacred and could have been employed in chapels of the monastery or the surrounding area.

To the traditional Dodekaorton, some icons add other scenes. A late Byzantine icon of the Crucifixion at the monastery also includes additional events of Holy Week, the period in which the icon would have had special significance.[3] The tetraptych shown here has a similar emphasis through the inclusion of the scenes of Christ dragged to Calvary (panel 4, top left), the Descent

18, panel 1, detail with Lamentation

18, panel 1, reverse, detail with drawing of veiled woman

from the Cross (panel 1, bottom left), and the Lamentation (panel 1, bottom right) and concludes with the most popular saints of the day, George and Demetrios (panel 4, bottom right). In this narrative, the Transfiguration (panel 2, bottom right) follows not the Baptism, as is traditional, but the Anastasis and precedes the Ascension (panel 3, bottom left), perhaps to underscore the notion of *metamorphosis*, the Greek name for the Transfiguration. But there is also an important visual relationship established between the upper and lower scenes in this panel, so the Baptism and the Transfiguration share the same composition. At both events, Christ's divinity was made manifest.

In the first panel (see page 162), the two supplementary scenes to the Dodekaorton in the lower register are artfully inserted into the narrative. Mary, who normally is at the left in the Descent from the Cross (see, for example, cat. no. 19), has been shifted to the right to parallel visually her position in the Annunciation above and the Lamentation at the right. To associate the Lamentation with the Descent, the painter repeated the angel in the sky, the ladder, and, especially, the dead body of Christ. By the unusual diagonal position of the swaddled infant and the tomblike manger above, Jesus's birth visually anticipates his death, an antithesis evoked in Good Friday rituals[4] and graphically defined in the small diptych with the Virgin Hodegetria and the Descent from the Cross (see cat. no. 19).

A delicate drawing on the back of the first panel, shown here, offers a rare glimpse of the process of creating an icon, for it is a study in reverse for the figure of the Virgin at the Descent. Black and red brushstrokes gracefully sketch a veiled woman reaching toward something. In the final version on the front, Mary bends forward to her son, and her gesture aids the removal of his body. Although drawings as a finished art form began to appear in Palaeologan manuscripts,[5] preparatory sketches for icons are rare[6]—hence the importance of this heretofore-unpublished detail.

RSN

NOTES

1. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 76–79.
2. Weitzmann 1982a, pp. 74–75; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 214–17, 220.
3. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 205.
4. Maguire 1981, pp. 91–108.
5. Velmans 1974.
6. Nelson 1981.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 208–13, and vol. 2, pp. 189–90; Weitzmann 1982a, pp. 22–23, 78–79.

18 (opposite), panel 2, detail

ΜΡ ΘΥ
Η ΑΝΑCΤΑCΙC
Η ΜΕΤΑ
ΜΟΡΦΩ CΙC

ΜΡ
ΘΥ
ΙC ΧC
Η ΑΠΟΚΑ
ΜΡ ΘΥ

19 Diptych with the Virgin Hodegetria and the Descent from the Cross

ca. 1400, Constantinople(?)

Tempera and metal leaf (probably gold) on panel

Combined panels: 24.8 × 38.7 × 1.4 cm
(9¾ × 15¼ × 9/16 in.)

INSCRIBED
On left wing: MH(τη)P Θ(εο)Y (Mother of God); I(ησοῦ)C X(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); H OΔHΓHΤΡIA (The guide); on right wing: H AΠOKAΘHΛΩCIC (The Unnailing); MH(τη)P Θ(εο)Y (Mother of God); I(ησοῦ)C X(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); on the titulus: O B(α)C(ι)Λ(εὺς) T(ῆς) Δ(ό)Ξ(ης) (The King of Glory)

CONDITION
Very good condition. Halos of Virgin and Child have been incised in metal leaf, while contoured halos on facing image have been painted. Rounded edges to paint losses indicate adhesion problem between pigment and panels, while fire caused loss of pigment and support in the right panel (see reverse, below).

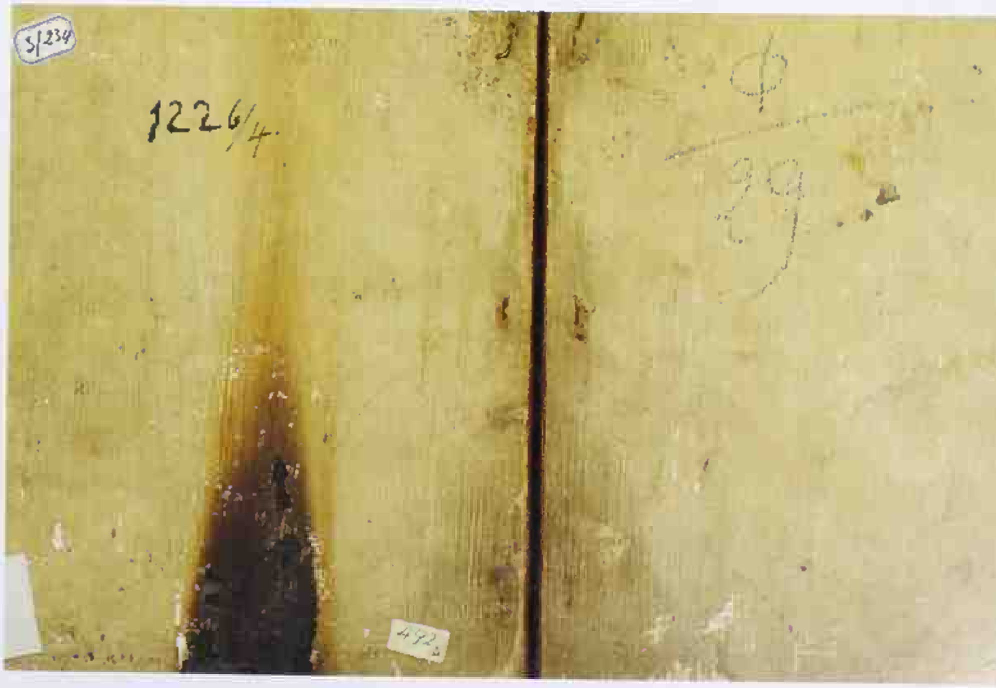
The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS SMALL DIPTYCH JOINS IMAGES of Christ at the beginning and end of his earthly life. At the left is the Virgin Hodegetria, clearly labeled and holding the child at the right, unlike in earlier images (cat. nos. 8, 9). The delicate facial features, gracefully elongated fingers, and bulbous head of the child are mannerisms of Byzantine painting in the last decades of the empire, a style continued by Russian icon painters.[1]

At the right, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus take down the dead Christ, as Mary, accompanied by mourning women, embraces her son. Joseph, "rich" and "respected" (MATT. 27:57; MARK 15:43), is the elder man standing beside the cross. Nicodemus kisses Jesus's hand, as another man removes the nails binding the feet. The standard title for the scene in Byzantine art, "The Unnailing," calls attention to the task being performed, but the artist has instead focused on Mary's tender response to her dead son. On the polyptych with feast scenes (cat. no. 18), Joseph on his ladder has greater prominence, but on the diptych he defers to the grieving mother and her child, who alone have prominent golden halos. Mary delicately rests her left hand on Jesus' shoulder; her face registers the horror of his death. Her dark garments reveal, in contrast, Jesus' bare torso, the thematic center of the scene.

Earlier representations of the Descent emphasized Joseph's efforts to lift the body from the cross,[2] but from the late twelfth century, monastic services for Good Friday and Holy Saturday encouraged greater attention to Mary's grief and prompted the creation of new images, such as the Man of Sorrows.[3] Like a fourteenth-century diptych of the Virgin and the Man of Sorrows that is documented at such liturgies, the Sinai panels were probably employed at these nocturnal rites.[4] Was this when it was damaged by a candle (see detail of reverse, below)? According to monastic statutes, the person responsible would have performed penance for allowing a candle to drip wax on liturgical objects, much less to burn a holy icon.[5] Such a small portable icon, with no known associations with others at the Sinai, may have been the gift of a pilgrim, one who presumably came for the Holy Week liturgies.

RSN



19, reverse, detail

NOTES
1. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, p. 205. See also Virgin Hodegetria of Smolensk from the beginning of the fifteenth century in Saltykov 1981, fig. 13.
2. On the Descent, see Millet 1916, pp. 467–88.
3. Belting 1980–81.
4. Of similar date and perhaps function is an icon in Cyprus with the Virgin on one side and the Descent from the Cross on the other: *Byzantine Museum* 1983, p. 47, fig. 11.
5. Featherstone and Holland 1982, p. 260.

REFERENCES
G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 234, and vol. 2, pp. 204–5; N. Chatzidakis 2002, pp. 342–45, no. 126.

HOLY SPACE

A Byzantine church and a modern museum are spaces set off from the ordinary world. One has icons, the other art—entities that are similar but not the same. Art enobles and enhances its viewing spaces and the lives of its beholders. A beautiful icon has a similar effect, but all icons, whether or not beautiful, lead beyond themselves and make the divine present in the church. Like the liturgy, they are remembrance and representation, and when assembled into ordered sequences, icons create a visual hierarchy that defines the viewer's place in the continuum from earth to heaven.

Icons were displayed in the medieval church on special stands and especially on the templon screen that still separates the altar from the nave. At Sinai the calendar icons, hanging on the columns of the nave, link the days of the months to images of saints; they sacralize time. Iconic images also appear on ritual objects, clerical vestments, and the pages of liturgical manuscripts and provide a focus for devotion and models of spiritual leadership.

Figure 107 (opposite)
Saint Basil with Liturgical Scroll, ca. 1200 (detail, cat. no. 26).

20 Epistyle with Twelve Feast Scenes

Twelfth century, Cyprus or Sinai

Tempera and gold over fine textile ground on panel[1]

Panel 1. ANNUNCIATION, NATIVITY, PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE
44.1 × 118.3 × 3.1 cm (17⅜ × 46⁹⁄₁₆ × 1³⁄₁₆ in.)

Panel 2. BAPTISM, TRANSFIGURATION, RAISING OF LAZARUS
45.1 × 114.9 × 3.2 cm (17¾ × 45¼ × 1¼ in.)

Panel 3. ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM, CRUCIFIXION, ANASTASIS
44.8 × 118.4 × 3.5 cm (17⅝ × 46⅝ × 1⅜ in.)

Panel 4. ASCENSION, PENTECOST, DORMITION OF THE VIRGIN
40 × 108.9 × 3.1 cm (15¾ × 42⅞ × 1³⁄₁₆ in.)

CONDITION
Blue overpainting of gilded background removed, as seen in cleaning strip on panels; extensive abrasion to both gilded and painted surfaces. Vertical incisions define columns in composition. The wooden inserts later introduced to top of panels were probably added to repair damage caused by hardware and mounting. Engaged frames; frame on panel 4 reduced along top and bottom edges.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

20, panel 1

THESE FOUR PANELS JOIN TOGETHER to form a broad templon epistyle—a horizontal beam that crowned the sanctuary screen in many medieval Byzantine churches. In its earliest manifestation, the beam's frontal portraits of saints, the Virgin, and Christ visually complemented and facilitated intercessional prayers recited during the service. Beginning in at least the eleventh century, painters decorated the epistyle with narrative scenes from the life of Christ that correspond to the major feast days of the Orthodox calendar.[2] On the Sinai epistyle these are the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Baptism, the Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the Anastasis, the Ascension, the Pentecost, and the Dormition of the Virgin. Placed on the sanctuary barrier, the narrative duplicated monumental representations on the walls of most churches, but—it should be emphasized—not in the Sinai basilica, which lacks the frescoes or mosaics of a typical Byzantine church. Framing views of the altar, the painted beam also formed an immediate backdrop for the priest as he stood below it at the threshold of the sanctuary and read from the Gospels or service books concerning the represented moments in the life of Christ.

This is the earliest templon beam to have survived from Sinai. Judging from the width of the combined panels, 4.6 m (15 ft.), the beam may have decorated the screen in front of the main sanctuary of the church; the broad dimensions

20, panel 2

prohibit the placement of this beam in any of the side chapels.[3] It is unknown when this element of the screen would have been dismantled, but the surfaces of the panels are abraded, and the right edge of panel 4 is trimmed, suggesting that the epistyle had fallen out of use, possibly when a new screen was designed for this location.[4]

Kurt Weitzmann, who most intensively studied these panels, attributed them to the hand of a Cypriot painter on the basis of close stylistic parallels with the church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa at Asinou (dated 1105–6) and with Sinai Codex 208, a lectionary that has been dated to the middle or third quarter of the twelfth century and attributed to an illuminator from Cyprus (cat. no. 34).[5]

SEJG

NOTES

1. In recent times, according to Kurt Weitzmann, two of the panels were located in the chapel of Constantine and Helena; two others were placed in the chapel of Saint George on top of a tower on the north wall of the monastery. Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 65–66
2. See, for example, the typicon of Gregory Pakourianos for the Monastery of the Mother of God Petritzonitissa in Bačkovo, dated December 1083; J. Thomas and Hero 2000, vol. 2, pp. 536, 552. For collected sources, see Spieser 1999
3. Measuring off of Forsyth's plan, the width of the sanctuary opening is approximately 5.5 m (18 ft.)
4. Scholars have recently begun to assemble a screen from icons of the thirteenth century. See Drandaki 2004, p. 38, figs. 2.4, 2.5.
5. See Weitzmann 1975; Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, pp. 9–10, 166–70, pl. 27, figs. 645–47

REFERENCES
G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 87–94, and vol. 2, pp. 99–104; Lazarev 1964–65, pp. 132–33, pl. 36, fig. 12; Weitzmann 1975; Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and Radojčić 1980, p. 23, figs. 49–53; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 64–67, figs. 1–2.

20, panel 3

20, panel 1, detail with Presentation in the Temple

20, panel 4

21 Epistyle with the Miracles of Saint Eustratios

Second or third quarter of the twelfth century

Tempera and gold on panel

Panel 1: 34.8 × 136.2 × 3.4 cm
(13 11/16 × 53 5/8 × 1 5/16 in.);
panel 2: 34.4 × 139.1 × 2.9 cm
(13 9/16 × 54 3/4 × 1 1/8 in.)

INSCRIBED

Panel 1: Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευ(σ)τρατιος ηομενος την υπο εκτιου πυρετου κατεχομενι(ν) (Saint Eustratios curing the [woman] suffering from a persistent fever); Ὁ ἅ[γιος] Ευ(σ)τρατης εξιπνιζων τον [. . .] εν το ναω τουτο προς τους εοθινους υμνους (Saint Eustratios awakening the [. . .] in this church for morning hymns); Ευ(σ)τρατιος θεραπεβων τον μενομε(νον) κε τας σαρκας αυτου κατεσθιοντων δια των αυτου λιψανον των ενταυθα (Saint Eustratios healing the [man who was] mad and devouring his own flesh, through his relics there); Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευ(σ)τρατιος ηομενος την υπο μι(ε)τριτεου κατεχωμενον δια της αυτου εφανίας (Saint Eustratios curing the [woman] suffering from metritis [uterine infection], by his appearance); Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευ(σ)τρατηος ηομενος τον φρενιτ[ιζ]οντ(α) δια των αυτου λιψανον (Saint Eustratios curing the [man with] phrenitis [brain fever] through his relics); [IC] XC ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ιω(άννης) ὁ [Πρόδρομος] (Christ, Saint John); panel 2: Η πεδες σημενωντ(ες) [. . .] τουτο τη αγια εορτη (The youths [beating the] semantron at this holy feast[?]); ηνιοντες [. . .] οι [. . .] τουτου εομ[1]; Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευστρατιος ηομενος την θιγάτερα της σηνκλιτικης (Saint Eustratios curing the daughter of Synkletike [or the Senator's wife]); [Ὁ ἅγιος Εὐσ]τρατιος ηομενος [. . .]καν μόναχὴ(ν) (Saint Eustratios curing the [. . .] nun); Η ἅγι(οι) πεντε θεραπεβοντες τὴν ἀφωνον κε ἀκῖνιτῶν (The Holy Five healing the mute and paralyzed [woman]); Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευ(σ)τρατιος ηομενος τον υπο τετὰνοῦ εχομενον (Saint Eustratios curing the [man] suffering from tetanus)

CONDITION

Painted parts of composition directly over preparation layer. Incised and burnished disks on engaged frame placed above and below each scene and between joins of arches. Incisions used to place columns in composition and create fine detail on capitals and base of each column. Halos are also incised and appear to have been drawn with compass. Minor retouching to edges of frame in red bole color; outer edges painted black-blue. Larger losses filled with wax.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

21, panel 1

21, panel 2, detail

THIS EPISTYLE, OR ICONOSTASIS BEAM—consisting of a pair of connected horizontal panels—is primarily devoted to the posthumous miracles of Saint Eustratios, an Armenian martyr of the time of Diocletian. In three cases, Eustratios performs the miracle in conjunction with his own relics, which are contained in a golden box. In one case, he is assisted by his four fellow martyrs, Mardarios, Auxentios, Eugenios, and Orestes. These popular saints, known collectively as the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, or the Holy Five, are represented as a group in countless church programs.[2] But scenes of their martyrdom are rare, and their posthumous miracles are attested solely by this one work of art.[3]

Each miracle is treated here as an independent unit; most involve extremely specific and urgent medical ailments: fever, madness, brain fever, uterine infection, and tetanus. Eustratios, who is larger in scale than the other figures, performs each miracle with the identical gesture of benediction; the reliquary box, held by an elderly custodian (a priest?), touches the ailing person, not Eustratios himself. The healings regularly take place in a space resembling a church courtyard.[4] The economic level of the patients seems to be quite high: several of the male participants wear white caps with dangling ribbons, some also a long coat like a caftan over a tunic.[5] The women wear wide white headdresses and earrings.

Weitzmann attributed the beam to the circle of the early-twelfth-century Cypriot painter of the twelve feasts epistyle (cat. no. 20). However, some aspects of the style of the Eustratios beam point to a date later in the century: for example, the soft pastel salmon garments and the golden disks that adorn the border and spandrels of the arches that separate the scenes. The back of the icon is painted with wavy red and black lines.

21, panel 2

There is no evidence for the existence of relics of Saint Eustratios on Mount Sinai in this period. A chapel of the Holy Five exists within the monastery walls, but its age is unclear.[6] The references to the saint's relics and the nature of his clientele imply an origin for the miracle cycle not on Sinai but in a proper sanctuary of the Holy Five, probably Arauraka, in the area of Trebizond, the five martyrs' place of burial and a known pilgrimage site.[7] Why these miracles should have been represented on Sinai remains an enigma, but it does suggest some connection of the monastery with the Black Sea region in the twelfth century.

NPŠ

21, panel 1, detail

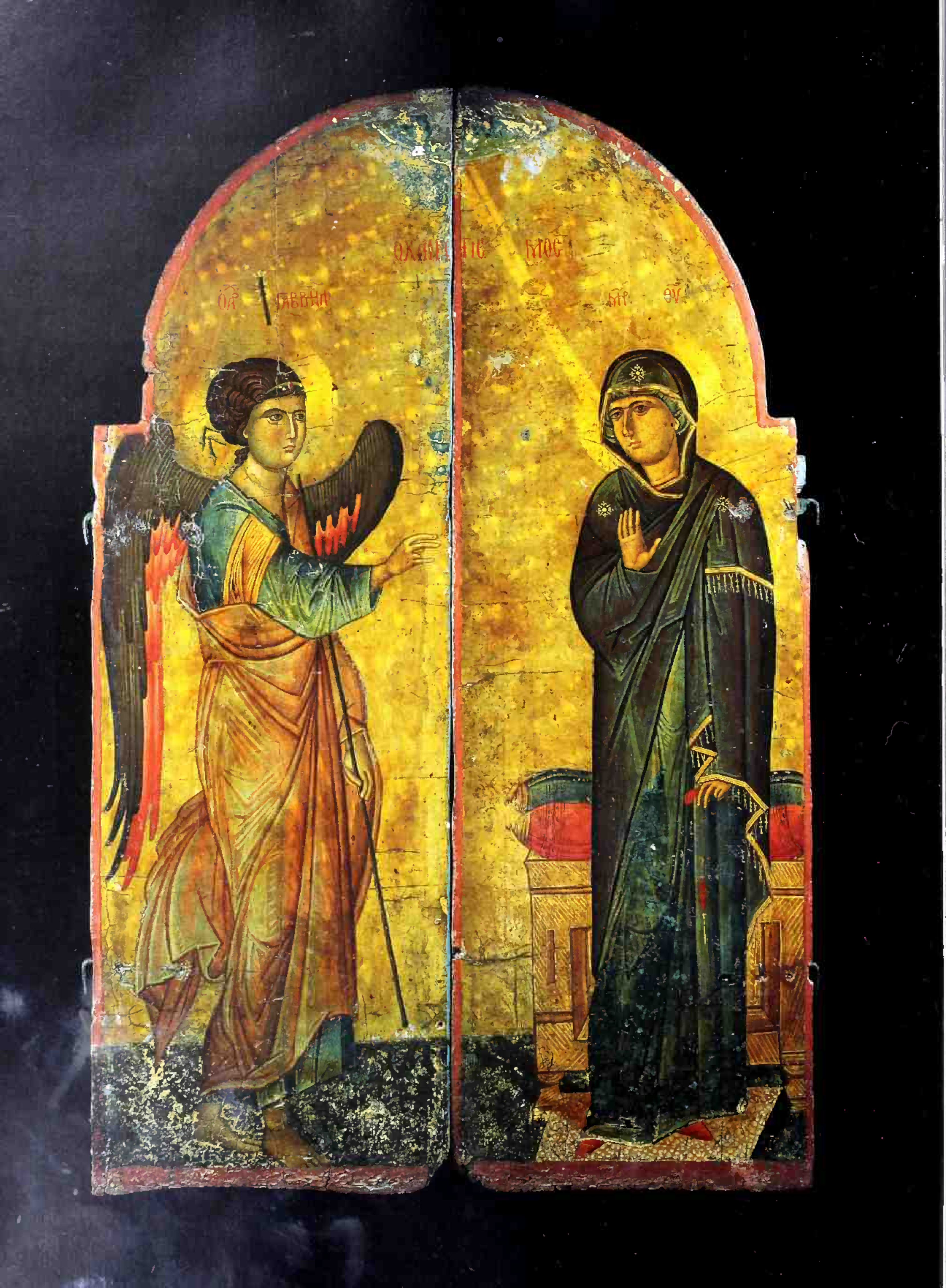
NOTES

1. The words are too fragmentary to allow for reconstruction. Scenes 7 and 8 are possibly connected, if we take the man in the window in scene 7 to be the same as the man standing before the mounted Eustratios in scene 8. Note his horse's carefully rendered horseshoes.
2. Weitzmann 1979; T. Chatzidakis-Bacharas 1982, pp. 74–81.
3. The written texts, including the hymnography for December 13, their feast day, are concerned exclusively with the saints' Passion and martyrdom. Miracle collections with a strong emphasis on posthumous healings do exist for other saints—e.g., those of Artemios (seventh century) and Luke of Steiris (tenth century), but for none of these is there a painted cycle devoted to the miracles.
4. The patients were apparently brought by relatives to Saint Eustratios's sanctuary; there they were laid out on beds to await his miraculous appearance.
5. Compare the costume of John Protospatharios in an Armenian Gospel book in Venice, Mekhitarist Library, S. Lazzaro, cod. 887, fol. 8: Spatharakis 1976, fig. 25; and the portraits of Theodore Gabras and his wife in Saint Petersburg 291, fols. 2v–3r: Spatharakis 1976, figs. 27–28. Eustratios himself wears this same white cap with ribbons in several Cappadocian churches.
6. Manafis 1990, p. 57, fig. 26. According to Doula Mouriki, the dimensions of the chapel match those of the beam, but the chapel itself may well have been constructed to house the beam. The only other surviving iconostasis beam depicting the life of a saint is one of Nicholas, also at Sinai: N. P. Ševčenko 1983, pp. 31, 33, and p. 196, figs. 5.2, 5.3. The horizontal format of the Eustratios beam and its emphasis on healings differentiates it from the so-called vita icons that first appeared on Mount Sinai in the early thirteenth century.
7. On the site, see Bryer and Winfield 1985, vol. 1, pp. 165–77; Rosenqvist 2002, pp. 193–94.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 103–11, and vol. 2, pp. 109–10; Weitzmann 1975, pp. 52–53, pl. 20; Weitzmann 1979, pp. 108–10, figs. 28–29; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 67–68; Mouriki 1990, pp. 106, 152–53, figs. 20–22; Vokotopoulos 1995, no. 38; Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 246–50, no. S61.

21, panel 1, reverse



22 Sanctuary Doors with the Annunciation

Early thirteenth century, Sinai

Silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish over textile and panel

125.4 × 41 × 3.8 cm (49⅜ × 16⅛ × 1½ in.)

INSCRIBED

Obverse: XAIPETIĊMOC (Annunciation); O APX(άγγελος) ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ (The archangel Gabriel); MH(τη)P Θ(εο)Γ (Mother of God); reverse: I(ησοῦ)C X(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ)

CONDITION

For Gabriel, the contour of the robe, wing, and neck has been incised into gold, under paint. Extensive abrasion to Virgin's drapery. Loss in the shoulder of Virgin, located above metal hardware. Burnished disks throughout gilded background. Extensive loss to original surface at top of both doors, minor loss at bottom. Varnish layer(s) thick, uneven, and very discolored.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt[1]

NOTES

1. The doors are located today in the Lower Panagia Chapel.
2. Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 236–37, no. S55.
3. See Constas 2006.

REFERENCE

Weitzmann 1964–65, pp. 17–18, fig. 13.

OF THE MANY PORTALS WITHIN the Byzantine church, the most important was the main entrance to the sanctuary. It was at this sacred threshold, at the center of the templon screen, that the curved panels decorated with the scene of the Annunciation were located. This is the later of two pairs of low, medieval doors representing this critical subject (see fig. 108 for the earlier pair).[2] The painter has placed the archangel and the Virgin at the outer limits of the panels in order to heighten the drama of Gabriel's revelation to Mary that, though chaste, she would conceive a son. Although the Virgin appears to retreat from the angel, raising her hand defensively, the tooled circles that appear to radiate from the Virgin seem to convey a different response; they visually enhance the mystical significance of the event and silently acknowledge that the angel's prophecy has been realized.

The placement of the Virgin on the sanctuary gate accords with the metaphorical understanding of the Mother of God as a portal in Byzantine hymnography. In the Akathistos Hymn, for example, the Virgin is called the "gate of sublime mystery," "gateway of salvation," and "key to the doors of paradise." In the late Byzantine period Symeon of Thessaloniki calls her "the Heavenly Gate" and the "Living Temple and Gate of God."[3] The representation of the Annunciation at the threshold of the sanctuary further visualized the dogmatic link between the moment of incarnation (i.e., Christ's assumption of human flesh within the womb of his mother) and his liturgical incarnation during the eucharistic rite. Once accepted into the mystical program of the decorated church, the Annunciation became the most frequently represented scene on the gates to the sanctuary. At the celebration of the Annunciation on March 25, the passage from Exodus about the Burning Bush was read. This association would have increased the significance of the Annunciation for the Sinai monks.

The thirteenth-century date of these two panels rests on stylistic comparison to other representations of the Annunciation. The rigid folds of the garments, fleshy faces and necks, and refined gestures fit well with thirteenth-century depictions of the scene in monumental painting. The interior of the gates was decorated at a much later date with a cross (see reverse of doors, this page), a symbol that was commonly painted on the reverse side of panels at Sinai and one that is frequently included on the reverse side of icons placed within the templon screen.

SEJG

22, reverse

Figure 108
Sanctuary Doors with the Annunciation, late twelfth century. Tempera and metal leaf on textile and panel, 120 × 64.5 × 2 cm (47¼ × 25⅜ × ¾ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

23 Sanctuary Doors with Moses and Aaron

ca. 1200–1250, Sinai

Tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

Left wing: 127.3 × 36.2 × 3.1 cm (50 1/8 × 14 1/4 × 1 3/16 in.); right wing: 127.3 × 35.2 × 3.5 cm (50 1/8 × 13 7/8 × 1 3/8 in.)

INSCRIBED

On obverse: ΜΩ(υ)CΗ(ς) ([The prophet] Moses); Ο ΠΡΟ(φήτης) ΑΡΩΝ (The prophet Aaron); on Aaron's scroll: Ο ΠΡΟΦΗ(της) ΑΑΡΡΩΝ (The prophet Aaron); ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗ(ς) ΑΑΡΩΝ (The prophet Aaron); on reverse: Ο ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΗ(σ)ΜΟ(ς) (The Annunciation); Ο ΠΡΟΦΙΤΗ(ς) ΜΩΥCΗC (The prophet Moses); Ο ΠΡΟΦΙΤΗ(ς) ΑΑΡΩΝ (The prophet Aaron); on Ark: Μ(ήτη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God)

CONDITION

Figures painted directly on white preparation layer. Moses' head slightly off-center in incised, double-contoured halo. Cleaning strips on both panels reveal original background. Extensive abrasion to background and significant loss at top and bottom of panels. Selected parts of figures appear to have been reworked; in area of Aaron's head, thick black outline goes over later pigmented varnish layer. Aaron's scroll shows white paint overlapping later pigmented varnish layer. Reverse: good condition with scattered losses over entire surface, especially at edges. Wood strip added at join. Major losses to Virgin on upper panel.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

DURING THE CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY, the priest passes back and forth through doors such as these in the iconostasis, the barrier that separates the nave of a church or chapel from the sanctuary. Here Moses and his brother Aaron, two figures closely associated with Sinai, are depicted side by side, both looking intensely at the viewer. Moses holds the tablets of the Law, Aaron a scroll on which his name has been inscribed. The portrait of Moses—with long, dark brown locks—is not the type usually found on Sinai icons, though it does occur in manuscript illumination.[1] The form of the marble tablets, a diptych whose wings are rounded at the top, is also unusual; it may reflect Western influence, as the Byzantine tablets are generally rectangular. Curious too is the image of Aaron not in the vestments of a high priest but as a prophet with a scroll (only his red miter indicates his priestly status).[2]

The haggard face of Moses with its white highlights, sunken cheeks, and furrowed brow, the vast triangular beard of Aaron, and the long curly locks on the shoulders of both men are exaggerations of a late-twelfth-century phase of Comnenian style,[3] while the shimmering pastel loops and pleats of the draperies associate these figures with the fulsome Moses portraits on Mount Sinai of the early thirteenth century.[4] The faces foreshadow the hugely expressive, lined faces of the Crusader "Veneto-Byzantine" works from later in the century.[5]

The theme encountered most commonly on Byzantine bema doors is that of the Annunciation (see, for example, cat. no. 22). Here the doors are adorned with the figures of Moses and Aaron instead, two individuals with particular relevance to the site and history of Sinai. Yet the Old Testament figures do make reference to the Mother of God in their own way, for both the Burning Bush encountered by Moses and the tabernacle housing the Ark of the Covenant established by Moses and Aaron were viewed as prefigurations of the Virgin.[6]

The reverse side of these doors, painted in the sixteenth century, makes this symbolism more explicit. Now both Moses and Aaron are high priests (only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, now identified with the church sanctuary). Moses carries a model of the tabernacle on which is painted not the ark but the Virgin and Child that it prefigures, and the stamnos, the jar that held the manna provided by God.[7] Aaron holds his flowering rod. The upper part of the wings incorporates the traditional Annunciation.

NPŠ

23, reverse

NOTES

1. Weitzmann and Bernabò 1999.
2. See Exodus 7:1.
3. For example, the churches of the Anargyroi and the Mavriotissa at Kastoria, of Lagoudera on Cyprus, and the early-thirteenth-century frescoes at Studenica and Mileševo in Serbia. The figure of Aaron could conceivably have been modeled on the figure of Elijah, who, with Moses, flanks Christ in the sixth-century Transfiguration mosaic in the Sinai apse.
4. Manafis 1990, pp. 166–67, figs. 36–37.
5. Manafis 1990, p. 189, fig. 64 (Anastasis).
6. The Ark of the Covenant was made to contain the tablets of the Law. The tabernacle eventually housed the Ark, as well as the flowering rod of Aaron, the stamnos of manna, and other liturgical implements. See Hebrews 9:1–7.
7. For another sixteenth-century representation of these objects on a Sinai bema door, see Manafis 1990, p. 215, fig. 90. The pilgrim Paisios, visiting Sinai in the late sixteenth century, mentions a great bema door in the basilica, whose wings (*parapotia*) were adorned with images of the prophets Moses and Aaron. He reports that the stamnos, the tablets of the Law, the censer, and the rod were all kept under the synthronon in the apse of the basilica. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 22, lines 557–62; German translation in Külzer 1994, p. 365.

REFERENCES

M. Chatzidakis 1979, pp. 355–56, pl. 64, figs. 18–19; Mouriki 1990, pp. 110, 165, fig. 35; Lidov 1999, p. 90, no. 25.

26

24, 25 | Virgin and Christ from Grand Deesis

24. VIRGIN FROM GRAND DEESIS

Early thirteenth century

Tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish over textile on panel

101.6 × 65.7 × 3.4 cm (40 × 25⅞ × 1 5⁄16 in.)

INSCRIBED

M(ήτη)P Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God)

CONDITION

Good condition. Virgin's halo incised. Losses to paint in Virgin's robe and veil. Major loss in center of right hand. Some regilding on background. Wood strips added to top and bottom of panel. Reverse: striped design over preparatory layer.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

25. CHRIST FROM GRAND DEESIS

Early thirteenth century

Tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish over textile on panel

101.6 × 66.4 × 3.5 cm (40 × 26⅛ × 1⅜ in.)

INSCRIBED

I(ησοῦ)C X(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); on the open book: † ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΟ ΦΩC ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΜΟΥ· Ο ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΩΝ ΕΜΟΙ ΟΥ ΜΗ ΠΕΡΗΠΑΤΗCΗ ΕΝ ΤΗ CΚΟΤΕΙΑ · ΑΛΛ' ΕΞΕΙ ΤΟ ΦΩC ΤΙC ΖΩΗ(ς) † (I am the light of the world; the one who follows me would not walk in shadow, but enter the Light of Life [JOHN 8:12].)

CONDITION

Halo incised. Extensive losses in gilded and painted surfaces. Former restoration treatment included toned regilding in background and a tratteggio-style retouching in figure of Christ and half of his inscription. Wood strips added to top and bottom of engaged frame. Reverse: striped design over preparatory layer.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

24 (opposite), Virgin from Grand Deesis

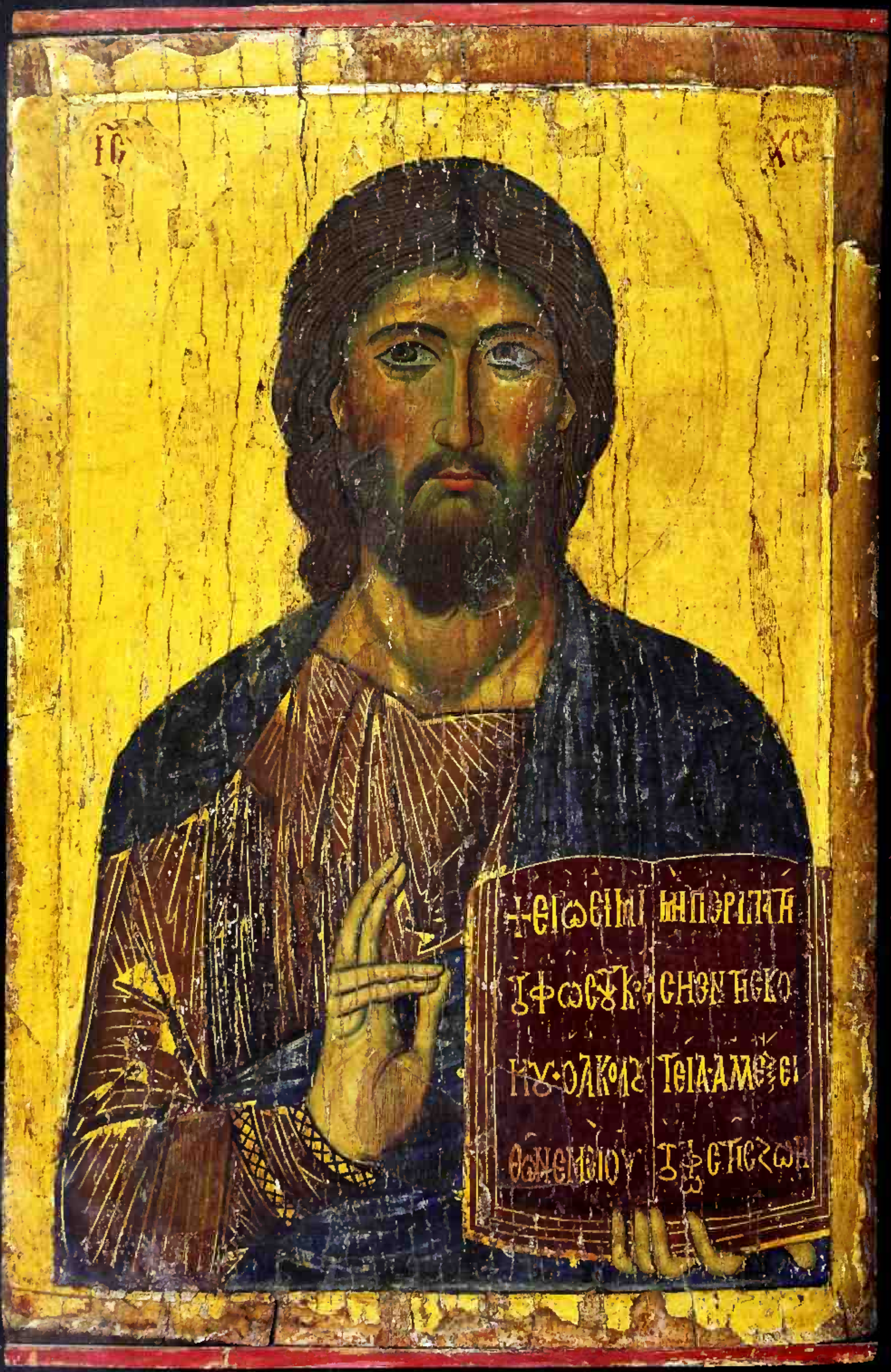
WHILE HER GAZE EVADES THE EYE OF THE VIEWER, Mary's hand raised in intercession directs the faithful across the space to the icon of Christ. Her son responds with a visual affirmation of divine benevolence—his blessing. His gaze addresses the viewer. Through the open book and inscription he offers the path to salvation and presents himself as the Light of Life.

The two icons were likely painted on Mount Sinai, as attested by the use of the characteristic gold burnishing of the halos and the decorative cloth-design pattern on the backs of the icons. As suggested by their large size, these two panels stood on an iconostasis, flanking the royal doors. Most likely joined by a third panel, of John the Baptist (fig. 109), these icons formed a Great Deesis (Intercession) group (see also fig. 36).[1] In a Byzantine Deesis, Mary and John the Baptist flank Christ and raise their hands to plead with him for the salvation of humanity; depending on the size of the iconostasis, the composition could easily expand to include the apostles, saints, and angels.[2]

The metaphor of Christ as the light stated in the inscription is actualized in the space of the church the moment the oil lamps are lit or burning candles are brought before this icon. Suddenly the burnished halo begins to dazzle. The Greek word used for nimbus, φεγγεῖον (literally "radiance of light"), captures this optical splendor.[3] The halo was understood to show divine energy and grace.[4] The cruciform burnished design of Christ's halo, along with the cascading chrysography of his drapery, would increase the optical dazzle of the icon, thus enhancing the vision of the Savior as the Light of Life.[5] Through this coruscating splendor the icon would perform divine presence.[6]

While exhibiting the same shimmer of gold, the icon of the Virgin is more subdued; Mary's halo displays simple burnishing, and her clothing, unlike Christ's gilded drapery, lacks the glittering highlights. The hierarchy between these two figures is thus visually established and confirmed. The faithful is led from the interceding hand of Mary to fall in *proskynesis* (veneration or prostration) before the light of the cosmos, and recognize the Savior in it.

24, reverse


IC
XC

Unlike repoussé metal revetments whose relief surface gives a stronger glittering effect, the burnished gold of these two paintings offers a mellower, subdued shimmer. It resembles the effect of a calm, flat metal surface and acts like a mirror, thus giving viewers the possibility of seeing themselves in the image. This mirror effect proleptically suggests the transformation that the faithful would undergo at the high point of the liturgy, the Eucharist. Through their shimmering glitter the two icons would also establish a visual path of salvation within the church space, linking these panels to the glistening eucharistic chalice and paten on the altar table in the inner sanctuary.

Philologists have frequently remarked on the spelling "mistakes" in the Greek inscriptions on Byzantine art objects. These inconsistencies are usually attributed to the poor education of the inscriber. Here the mistakes are in the orthography: CKOTEIA instead of σκοτία, TIC rather than Τῆς. Orthographically incorrect but phonetically precise, the inscriptions render the vowels as they are spoken. This reliance on sound demonstrates that inscriptions (known in Greek as *epigrams*, "letters inscribed on a surface") on art objects were performative—meant to be pronounced out loud in the course of the liturgy or individual prayer.[7] The writing is a prompt for speaking the phrase in time and space. Through this performance the icon becomes a sonorous, speaking body—it is *empsychos graphe* (literally, "in-spirited," inhabited by the Holy Spirit, animated).[8]
BP

NOTES

1. The icon of Saint John the Baptist measures 97.5 × 66.5 cm (38⅜ × 26⅛ in.). Its condition does not permit exhibition. As with the icons of Christ and the Virgin, the backside of the John the Baptist panel exhibits the same pattern of alternating red and blue-black, undulating brushstrokes. Two other Sinai icons, of Saints Peter and Paul, present the appropriate measurements to fit the same Great Deesis composition. Aspra-Vardavakis 1999, pp. 180–95, fig. 12.
2. Annemarie Weyl Carr in *ODB*, s.v. "Deesis" (with bibliog.).
3. Annemarie Weyl Carr and Alexander Kazhdan in *ODB*, s.v. "Nimbus."
4. Symeon, archbishop of Thessaloniki (1416/17–29), on the symbolic meaning of halos, *PG*, vol. 155, col. 869B.
5. On the significance of shimmering lights, see Franses 2003; and Peers 2004, pp. 110–11, 115–17, 126–31.
6. Pentcheva 2006b, and Pentcheva forthcoming, chap. 4.
7. Pentcheva forthcoming, Papalexandrou 2001. See also Nelson 1989.
8. On *empsychos graphe*, see Pentcheva 2006b; Pentcheva 2004.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1980, no. 18, Mouriki 1990, pp. 114, 176, figs. 49–50; M. Chatzidakis 1995a; Aspra-Vardavakis 1997; Aspra-Vardavakis 1999.

25 (opposite), Christ from Grand Deesis

Figure 109 (right)
John the Baptist from Grand Deesis, early thirteenth century. Tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish over textile on panel, 97.5 × 66.5 cm (38⅜ × 26⅛ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Bruce White.

Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΣ

26, 27 | Saint Basil and Saint John Chrysostom with Liturgical Scrolls

26. SAINT BASIL WITH LITURGICAL SCROLL

ca. 1200, Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf (probably silver) with pigmented varnish on panel

84.3 × 35.9 × 2.5 cm (33 3/16 × 14 1/8 × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

O ΑΓΙΟC ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΟC (Saint Basil); on his scroll. † Πρόσχες Κ(ύρι)ε Ἰ(ησο)ῦ Χ(ριστ)ὲ ὁ Θ(εὸ)ς ἡμῶν ἐξ ἁγίου κατηκητηρίου σου καὶ ἀπὸ θρόνου δόξης της βασιλείας σου καὶ ἐλθὲ εἰς τὸ ἁγιασαι ἡμᾶς (Lord Jesus Christ our God, give heed from Thy holy dwelling place, and from the throne of glory of Thy kingdom, and come and sanctify us [Prayer of the Elevation of the Bread, from the Liturgy of John Chrysostom])

CONDITION

Uneven varnish layers. Frame created by adding wood strips to panel. Large cracks at interface between panel and applied frame, especially in corners. Red-brown paint layer on back was later painted white with broad brushstrokes.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

27. SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM WITH LITURGICAL SCROLL

ca. 1200, Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf (probably silver) with pigmented varnish on panel

84.1 × 35.6 × 2.5 cm (33 1/8 × 14 × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

O ΑΓΙΟC ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΧΡΥCOCΤΟΜΟC (Saint John Chrysostom); on his scroll: † Οὐδεὶς ἄξιος τῶν συνδεδεμένων ταῖς σαρκικαῖς ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ ἡδοναῖς προσερχεσθ(αι) ἢ προσεγγίζειν ἢ λειτουργεῖν σοι βασιλ[εῦ τῆς δόξης] (No one entangled in carnal desires and pleasures is worthy to meet or approach you or to serve you, O King of Glory . . . [Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn from the Liturgy of John Chrysostom])[1]

CONDITION

Uneven varnish layers. Frame created by adding wooden strips to panel. Large cracks at interface between panel and applied frame, especially in corners. Red-brown paint layer on back later painted white with broad brushstrokes.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

26 (opposite), Saint Basil with Liturgical Scroll

THIS FINE PAIR OF PANELS PRESENTS two fourth-century bishops, Saints John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, considered the authors of the two main liturgies of the Orthodox Church. They bend forward, as though toward an altar, and on their scrolls are written prayers recited in a low voice by a celebrant of the liturgy of Chrysostom. Their portraits are conventional—Basil with a long black beard, John with an emaciated face, scrawny beard, and balding head. They wear the standard vestments of high-ranking bishops, especially the *polystavrion*—a phelonion, or outer mantle, covered with crosses.

Chrysostom and Basil are often represented at the head of a line of officiating bishops in the frescoed apse of a church. But here they occupy separate icon panels, a highly unusual situation. Six additional icons in the monastery bearing images of celebrant bishops belong to the same series (figs. 110–15).[2] The presence of Ignatios Theophoros (a bishop martyr of Antioch) in this company is somewhat unusual, and the inclusion of the evangelist Mark, the first bishop of Alexandria, is entirely unprecedented.[3] Mark's counterpart here in rank and dress is Saint James Adelphotheos, who was the first bishop of Jerusalem. The enumeration of episcopal sees here suggests some effort at positioning Sinai into this ecclesiastical framework.

Paisios, a Greek churchman who visited Sinai in the late sixteenth century, saw images of eight hierarchs in the apse of the Chapel of the Burning Bush, five of whom he names. He may well be referring to this very series of icons.[4] If this is indeed their original location (and the dimensions of the apse do make this possible), it reveals how crucial it had become by the early thirteenth century to have images of officiating bishops near an altar, even when conditions made it difficult to paint them there. The antiquity of the architecture on Mount Sinai often led to unusual solutions. Such a location would also indicate that the altar in this Chapel of the Burning Bush was being used for the celebration of the Eucharist, not merely for prayers.[5]

The date of these icons is problematic. The lined faces, with their anxious, raised brows, suggest a date in the very early thirteenth century.[6] But the almost metallic *polystavria*, the repetitive poses and ornament, the surprisingly glowing visages and feathery rendering of the hair of some of the elderly bishops, the

Figures 110–12 (right)
(Left to right) Evangelist Mark, Saint John Eleimon, Saint Athanasios, ca. 1200. Tempera and metal leaf (probably silver) with pigmented varnish on panel. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photos: Bruce White.

flat-footed, low-slung figures of the two "apostle" bishops do not fit well with works of this period. Mark and James Adelphotheos are dressed very oddly indeed; under their episcopal vestments they wear antique robes and sandals—a curious and perhaps unparalleled amalgam of two dress codes, that of the apostle/evangelist and that of the bishop. Manoles Chatzidakis has proposed that though they are painted in a style characteristic of the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, this series of icons only copies works of this period and was actually executed by the team of artists who were busy painting frescoes based on early models elsewhere in the monastery in the second half of the fifteenth century.[7] It is possible, however, that as we learn more about the range of styles in use during the thirteenth century, these bishops will again take their place in the earlier period.

NPŠ

Figures 113–15
(Left to right) Gregory Theologos, Ignatios Theophoros, and James Adelphotheos, ca. 1200. Tempera and metal leaf (probably silver) with pigmented varnish on panel. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photos: Bruce White.

NOTES

1. The transcriptions reproduced here are as they appear on the icons, with accents and breathing marks included.
2. There are three right-facing bishops—the evangelist Mark and Saints John Eleimon and Athanasios; and three left-facing bishops—Gregory Theologos, Ignatios Theophoros, and James Adelphotheos. They carry, respectively, the prothesis prayer, the first antiphon prayer, the *proskomide* prayer from the liturgy of Basil, the Trisagion prayer, the second antiphon prayer, and again the prothesis prayer (Mark and James carry the same text). The original order cannot be determined, but Chrysostom and Basil surely headed their respective lines, and it is likely that the two "apostolic" bishops, Mark and James, who do not wear the *polystavrion*, came at the far end of each line.
3. Babić and Walter 1976, pp. 269–80.
4. There does seem to be wall space enough to allow for a series of eight icons, plus the image of the (Virgin as the) Burning Bush seen by Paisios in the center of the bema, in place of the usual Hetoimasia or Christ on the altar. According to Paisios, the conch of the apse was covered with gold-colored mosaics. He also refers to a touching image of the "Koimesis of Catherine." Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 33, lines 827–40.
5. For the integration of the Chapel of the Burning Bush into the liturgical life of Sinai in the early thirteenth century, see the *Typikon* of Symeon of Sinai: Dmitrievskij 1895–1917, vol. 3, pp. 394–419; partial translation by N. P. Ševčenko in Ševčenko 2004
6. Their attribution by Piatnitsky to the mid-twelfth century should be considered too early. The icons of Mark and James were probably executed by a different artist.
7. M. Chatzidakis 1970–72, pp. 225–28, pls. 83, 84. He proposes that the line of bishops formed part of a Great Deesis that may once have adorned the templon of the chapel of Saint James Adelphotheos, which lies to the north of the bema of the basilica. But the bishops are officiating and are therefore more likely to have flanked an altar than an image of the Deesis.

REFERENCES

M. Chatzidakis 1970–72, pp. 225–28, pls. 83–84.
Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 238–39, no. 556; Galey 2003, p. 49.

27 (opposite). Saint John Chrysostom with Liturgical Scroll

ΟΥΔΕΙC
ΑΞΙΟC ΤΩΝ
CΥΝΔΕΔΕ
ΜΕΝΩΝ ΤΑΙC
CΑΡΚΙΚΑΙC
ΕΠΙΘΥΜΙΑΙ
C ΚΑΙ ΗΔΟΝ
ΑΙC ΠΡΟC
ΕΡΧΕCΘΑΙ
Η ΠΡΟCΕΓΓΙ
ΖΕΙΝ Η ΛΕΙ
ΤΟΥΡΓΕΙΝ ΣΟΙ

ΗΛΙΑΣ

28 Prophet Elijah Fed by a Raven

ca. 1050–1100

Tempera and gold over textile on panel

129.2 × 69.2 × 3.5 cm (50⅞ × 27¼ × 1⅜ in.)

INSCRIBED

Ο ΠΡ(ο)Φ(ή)Τ(η)C ΗΛΙΑC (The prophet Elijah); in twelve-syllable Greek verse: Μορφοῦντι, Θεσβῖτα, σε [Στεφ]άνω δίδου / τοῖς σοῖς ἱλασμοῖς πταισμάτων ἀμνηστίαν (For Stephen, who fashioned your image, O Tishbite, obtain by your mercy pardon of transgressions); in Arabic:

اصفح ليص صوركا اصطفا-.....ايليا غفر ا- ما احترما

(Forgiveness for Stephen who painted you, O [prophet] Elijah. May God forgive him the sins he has committed)[1]

CONDITION

Decorative motifs (including cloud, God's sleeve, bread, and three lines in halo) incised in metal leaf. Thin brown underpainting of figure. Scattered losses where right and left edges of figure cover metal leaf. Figures painted directly on gold. Several layers of discolored and/or pigmented varnish, as seen in cleaning strip on right side. Engaged frame. Original repair to panel; on the back, a piece of wood half the thickness of the panel has been secured by two nails driven through the front. Reverse: striped design over preparatory layer.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE HEBREW BIBLE (1 KINGS 19:8–18) recounts that God spoke to prophet Elijah the Tishbite at Mount Horeb, the present Jebel Musa near the Sinai monastery. Since the fourth century Christian pilgrims have prayed at a chapel by the cave where Elijah is believed to have once stayed.[2] According to an inventory from the 1920s, the present panel was originally housed there.[3] However, a description made between 1577 and 1592 locates it on the east wall of the narthex, or vestibule, in the monastery's main basilica.[4] It now hangs on the north wall of the basilica's nave.[5]

The icon portrays the prophet anachronistically dressed in an ancient Roman tunic, like other Old Testament figures in Byzantine art. The fur mantle over the tunic is Elijah's special attribute (2 KINGS 2:8, 2:13–14). It was venerated as a relic in one of the palace churches of the Byzantine capital, Constantinople.[6]

With arms raised in prayer, the prophet stands alert while a hand reaches out from the sky in a gesture signifying speech. The raven in the upper right corner refers to an earlier episode in his life (1 KINGS 17:2–7). Since Christians compared the nourishment that Elijah miraculously received in the desert to the bread of Holy Communion,[7] this scene was popular with Byzantine artists, who usually portrayed the prophet seated in a cave.[8] In terms of iconography, the closest parallel for the present image is found among the illustrations that a Constantinopolitan painter made in the 1030s for a Georgian volume of saints' lives.[9] The style of the Sinai icon points to the later decades of the eleventh century: it is closely comparable to the miniatures in two Greek Gospel books whose script dates them to about 1050–1100.[10] The lettering of Stephen's Arabic inscription here is also typical of that period (see also cat. no. 29).[11]

GRP

28, reverse

NOTES

1. Translation from the Arabic by George Saliba.
2. On the history of the site and pilgrims' accounts of it, see Pringle 1993–, vol. 2, p. 59, no. 152 (with bibliog).
3. N. Nikolaïdis, cited in Rabino 1935, p. 47, and in Rabino 1938, p. 59.
4. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 16, lines 383–84.
5. Photographs in Evans 2004, pp. 54, 62.
6. Janin 1953–81, vol. 3, p. 144 (with bibliog.).
7. Ştefănescu 1936, pp. 150–51.
8. On the scene's iconography, see Bascu-Barabas 1993.
9. Tbilisi, Kekelidze Institute, Ms. A-648 (see Amiranašvili 1966, fig. 19; on the manuscript in general, see Alibegašvili 1983, pp. 114–15, 117–18, 122).
10. Vienna, National Library, Cod. theol. gr. 154 (see Lowden 1997, p. 288; Buberl and Gerstinger 1937–38, vol. 2, pp. 21–31, no. 5, pls. 6–11) and Athens, National Library, Cod. 57 (see Marava-Chatzinikolaou and Toufexi-Paschou 1978–97, vol. 1, pp. 108–17, no. 26, pls. 216–19).
11. As kindly confirmed by Irene A. Bierman, University of California, Los Angeles.

REFERENCES

Amantos 1928, p. 45, Rabino 1935, pp. 48, 99; Rabino 1938, pp. 59–60, 115, and p. 111, nos. 145, 146; Sotiriou 1953, pp. 154–55; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 74, and vol. 2, pp. 88–89; Weitzmann 1978, pp. 36, 96–97, no. 29; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 102–6 (with bibliog.); Mouriki 1990, pp. 109–10, 164, fig. 34, and p. 385 n. 43; Gandis 1993–94, pp. 370–71, figs. 6–9; Mouriki 1995, p. 120, no. 15; Vokotopoulos 1995, pp. 78, 203, no. 56; Lidov 1999, pp. 92–93, no. 26; Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 242–44, no. 558 (with bibliog.); Piatnitsky 2004

29 Moses Receiving the Law before the Burning Bush

ca. 1050–1100

Tempera and gold on panel

134 × 69.9 × 4.1 cm (52¾ × 27½ × 1⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED

O ΠΡ(ο)Φ(ή)Τ(η)C MOΥCHC (The prophet Moses): in twelve-syllable Greek verse: † Ὅς ἱστόρησεν, ὦ θεόπτα, σὸν τύπον / [αἰτ]εῖ Στέφανος λύσιν ἀμπλακημά(των). (The person who painted your likeness, / named Stephen, requests, O God-seer, release from his errors); in Arabic:
يا ناظر الله اعطي ملك معفرة لاصطفا- ، الذي صور محاسنكا
(O you who have seen God, grant forgiveness to Stephen who painted your virtues);[1] in a later hand in Greek: † Μνήσθητι, Κ[ύρι]ε, τὴν ψυχὴν Μανουὴλ (Remember, Lord, the soul of Manuel)

CONDITION

Small losses to the paint and gilding overall. Previous restoration removed discolored layers of varnish, as seen in the cleaning strip on right side. Large vertical crack runs through center of panel. Painting executed on a single panel. Reverse: striped design over preparatory layer. Two modern cross battens added.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

NOTES

1. Translation from the Arabic by George Saliba
2. Lauxtermann 2003, p. 159.
3. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 16, lines 383–84; compare the photographs in Forsyth and Weitzmann 1965, pls. 44–45.
4. Underwood 1966–75, vol. 2, pp. 14, 16, 30–31; C. Mango 2000, p. 61, pl. 18.
5. On the iconography of this scene, see Aliprantis 1986.
6. Forsyth and Weitzmann 1965, pls. 42, 127, 174; Evans 2004, p. 49.

REFERENCES

Amantos 1928, pp. 44–45; Rabino 1935, pp. 48, 98; Rabino 1938, pp. 59, 115, and p. 111, nos. 142, 144; G. Sotiriou 1953, pp. 153–54; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 75, and vol. 2, pp. 89–90; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 102–6 (with bibliog.); Mouriki 1990, pp. 110, 385 n. 44; Garidis 1993–94, pp. 370–71, figs. 6–9; Mouriki 1995, p. 121, no. 16; Vokotopoulos 1995, pp. 79–80, 204, nos. 57, 58; Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 242–44, no. 559 (with bibliog.); Piatnitsky 2004.

THE PRESENT ICON FORMS A PAIR with that of Elijah (see cat. no. 28), since the two are almost the same size, their backs are painted with the same striped pattern, and both are inscribed with the same person's prayers. The claim by Stephen in the inscription that he produced the images means, as in similar Byzantine texts,[2] that he paid for their making. He evidently spared no expense for his future salvation and had the entire panels, rather than just the visible background, covered with gold leaf that shines luxuriously beneath the pigment.

In the late sixteenth century, Stephen's icons flanked the entrance from the narthex into the nave of the Sinai basilica.[3] Their position was probably comparable to that of the two fourteenth-century mosaic panels of Saints Peter and Paul at the church of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople.[4] The scene of Moses receiving the Law (EXOD. 24:9–15) occurs often in Byzantine art,[5] but here the figure is uncharacteristically shown facing left, as in the sixth-century mosaic above the basilica's altar.[6] This, as well as the presence of an Arabic inscription, suggests that the icon was made especially for the Sinai monastery. The Burning Bush next to Moses' unshod feet relates to the biblical event (EXOD. 3:1–4:17) whose site the Sinai basilica marks.

GRP

29, reverse

30 | Menologion Diptych with Feast Scenes

Eleventh century

Tempera and gold on panel

36.5 × 49.1 × 1.4 cm (14 3/8 × 19 5/16 × 9/16 in.)

INSCRIBED
Back: left wing: X(ριστός) X(άριν) X(ριστιανοῖς) X(αρίζει) (Christ bestows grace on Christians);[1] right wing: I(ησοῦ)C X(ριστό)C NIKA (Jesus Christ conquers)

CONDITION
Excellent condition overall. Saints have incised halos. Abrasion to gilded background between rows. Pigmented varnish appears to have been applied only to the rows between figures and then inscriptions applied over varnish. Leather hinge joins panels. Reverse of right panel has remnants of gilding over the entire decorative border design; remnants of black inscriptions over surface. Reverse of left panel shows evidence of having been entirely repainted with orange paint; previous mechanical cleaning reveals remnants of original surface treatment.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

SPREAD ACROSS THE TWO WINGS OF THIS ICON are the carefully identified events and saints commemorated during the church year. The portraits of saints, grouped in threes, begin with the start of the administrative year, September 1, and with the saint celebrated that day, Symeon Stylites, always recognizable by his pillar. Also included in this section are several narrative scenes, including the Birth of the Virgin (September 8) and the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) in the first row. At the top, above the rows of saints, there are images in burnished gold circles of Christ, the Virgin and Child, and the series of twelve great feasts—the Dodekaorton—that became standard from the eleventh century.[2] Reversing the order of templon programs, Jesus on the left wing turns his eyes to Mary and the infant at the right. The figure of Christ is the type often seen in domical images.[3] The Virgin and Child are damaged, but enough remains to suggest that this is the Virgin Eleousa, in which the mother holds her child and he reaches across to her cloak.[4]

Unlike with most icons, the back of the diptych is fully finished (see below). The monochrome ornament on a reddish ground resembles tooled leather book bindings. The overall design follows conventions of earlier ivory diptychs, also decorated with an ornamental border, central cross, and the common abbreviation IC/XC NI/KA.[5] Rarer are the four X's on the left wing, but they are found in the same form and position on a later enameled cross reliquary at Esztergom.[6] Both inscriptions provide solace to the beholder of this small personal diptych that, in view of its outer decoration, was also meant to be displayed closed.

RSN

30, reverse

NOTES
1. Walter 1997, p. 212, a reference I owe to Georgi Parpulov.
2. Robert F. Taft in *ODB* (online edition), s.v. "Great Feasts."
3. E.g., Dome of Daphni. Belting 1994, fig. 100.
4. Baltoyanni 2000, pp. 149–51
5. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1979, vol. 2, figs. 38b, 60.
6. Cutler 2002, p. 38, fig. 1. I thank Anthony Cutler for this reference.

REFERENCES
G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 131–35, and vol. 2, pp. 119–20; Galavaris 1990, pp. 100, 148–49, fig. 17; Belting 1994, 252–53.

31 | Menologion Icon for August

ca. 1200, Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

129.5 (with cross, 139.7) × 67.6 × 3.2 cm
(51 [with cross, 55] × 26⅝ × 1¼ in.)

INSCRIBED
Each saint has an identifying caption written in red alongside his or her head.

CONDITION
Several of the saints have been repainted; some inscriptions have been repainted in red color consistent with the original. Extensive passages of restored metal leaf. Frame is a later addition.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS MENOLOGION (OR CALENDAR) ICON is one of twelve such panels in the main church at Sinai, each displaying the saints celebrated in a single month of the year. This particular panel, bearing the saints for August, is the last in the series (the church year begins September 1).

The saints are grouped essentially in triads, five days per row. The most important saint of the day occupies the central position, but when there is a plethora of saints for one day, and too few for another, saints belonging to one group may be distributed over several different days. The choice of saints follows for the most part the Constantinopolitan calendar, even if the dates of the feasts are often shifted a few days one way or the other with respect to that model. The holy portraits are at once generic and highly individualized. Each saint is revealed, by his or her costume, to belong to a specific category, such as martyr, bishop, monk, apostle, nun, and so on. Then each figure is carefully individualized through physiognomy: young, middle-aged, or old; beardless, or short- or long-bearded; balding or wild haired, and so on. Despite the small scale, these portraits are remarkably consistent with established Byzantine portrait types. When a major feast day comes around (e.g., the Transfiguration on August 6, the Dormition on August 15, the beheading of John the Baptist on August 29, or the deposition of the Virgin's belt on August 31), it is given priority and its image appears in place of the holy figures.[1]

The twelve Sinai panels hang today on the twelve columns of the basilica, a location noted by pilgrims at least as early as the fifteenth century. Latin pilgrims believed the icons to be pictures of saints whose relics were embedded within the columns, and that a visit to the columns one by one could earn years of indulgences.[2]

All the Byzantine calendar icons that survive come from Sinai.[3] Their original function remains unclear, other than to give a precise visual identity to each of the hundreds of venerated figures that make up the universal church.[4] An eleventh-century set of manuscripts of saints' lives, unrelated to Sinai, uses the same portrait-gallery format to depict in a frontispiece every saint whose life appears in the volume; this suggests a more widespread distribution of the form, and perhaps the desire that each written hagiographic text be balanced by an accessible, and equally authoritative, image.[5]

NPŠ

31, front and reverse, with new top

NOTES

1. These scenes appear, respectively: the first on the second row; the last on the third row; and two scenes on the lowest row—the third from the right and the far right.
2. Stewart 1893–97, vol. 2, pp. 608–10, 623.
3. There are three other sets of calendar icons at Sinai, all smaller and older than the month-by-month series. Two of these sets have the saints grouped into somewhat larger units (three months or a half-year on a single panel). One of these two sets, and the third set as well, opts for images of saints' martyrdoms over standing portraits.
4. There are more than a thousand portraits on these twelve panels. The run of saints and their martyrdoms should be viewed in connection with the verse calendars of Christopher of Mitylene (eleventh century) and others. See Follieri 1980; Hutter forthcoming.
5. N. P. Ševčenko 1990, pp. 11–26 ("Edition A").

REFERENCES
G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 117–19; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 107–12; Mouriki 1990, p. 108; N. P. Ševčenko 2002.

31, detail

Ιω

32 Gospel Book in Arabic

860(?), Palestine

Ink and wash on parchment

Each leaf: 22 × 15.8 cm (8⅝ × 6³⁄₁₆ in.)

INSCRIBED

On fol. 16r: Next to the portrait of the evangelist, in abbreviated Greek and in Arabic: "John."

CONDITION

Fragmentary manuscript of fourteen disbound quires. Parchment is cockled with significant deformation and losses due to burial and presumed rodent damage. Considerable dirt accumulations on surfaces of a number of folios. Otherwise the state of preservation of inks and pigments is very good.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. NF Arab.membr.14)

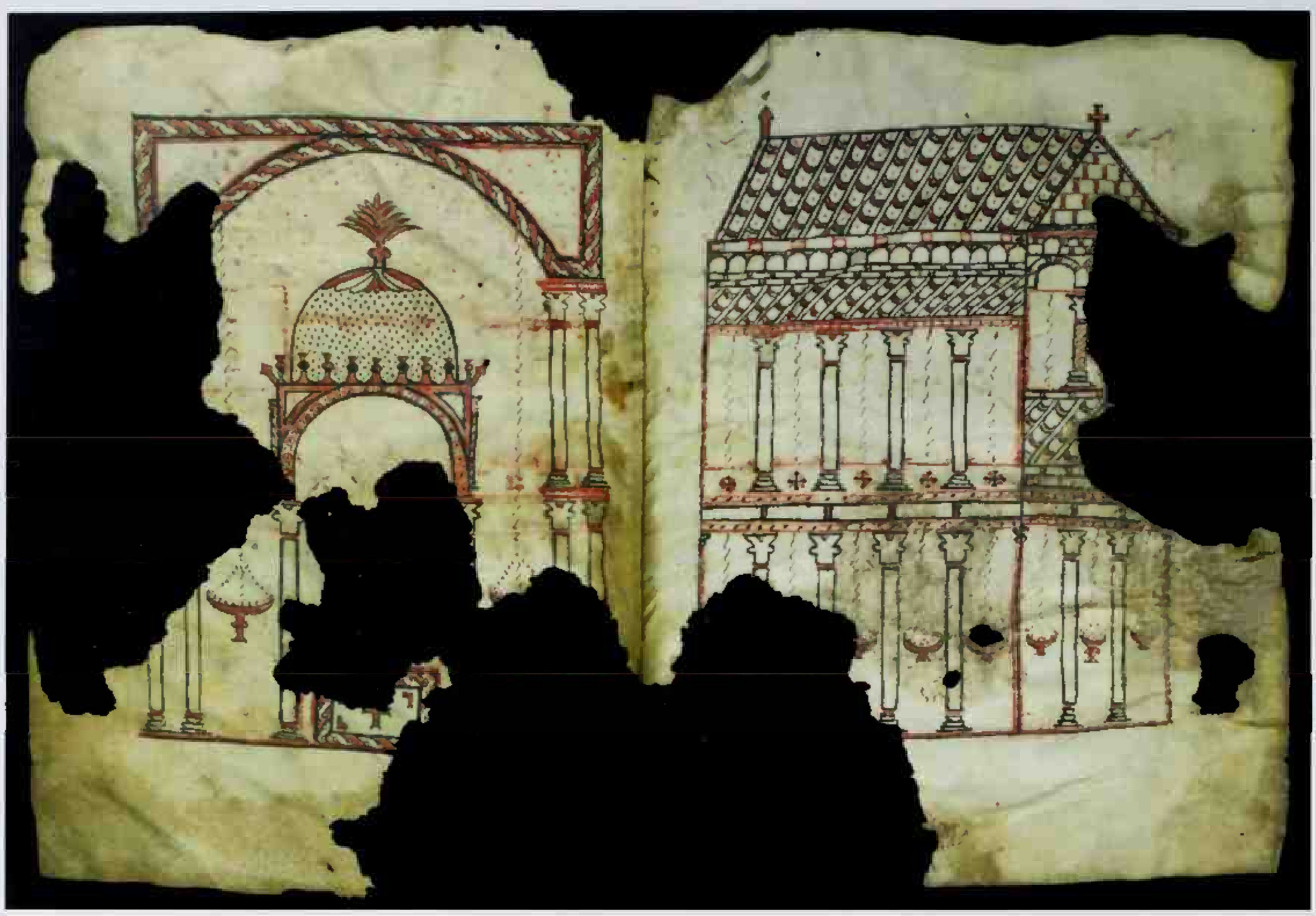
TOGETHER WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF OTHER OLD BOOKS, this manuscript was accidentally discovered at the Sinai monastery in 1975, in a storeroom that had been immured and forgotten for centuries.[1] Lacking covers and many pages, the volume presently contains parts of the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John. Some of its missing leaves can be identified. The frontispiece, with an image of Christ on one side and the evangelist Matthew on the other, is now in Saint Petersburg (fig. 116).[2] Five leaves from the end were also found in 1975 but catalogued as a separate item.[3] They contain a scribal entry that reads (as translated by Maria Mavroudi):

> This Gospel book of the four evangelists was finished with the help of God. The first is Matthew, who expressed himself in Hebrew in [al-S-n-d. . .?]. The second is Mark, who expressed himself in Greek in the city of R[ome?]. The third is Luke who expressed himself in Greek in the city of Alexandr[ia]. The fourth is John, son of Zebedee, who expressed himself in Greek in the city of Ephesus. In the year, from among the years of eternity, six-thousand-three-hundred and sixty-eight. And, in years of the Romans, in the year eight hundred and nine [. . .].[4] on Tuesday on the feast of my Saint George, on the third of the time [period] of November, [. . .] Tuesday on the eighth of the time [period] of [the month] Muharram of the year [. . .].[5] Blessing from God, prosperity, joy, and eternal happiness, [. . .] and [?] our Lord Jesus the Messiah is with his spirit. Amen.

This note makes the Sinai Gospel book the oldest dated Christian Arabic manuscript. Its precise chronology is not clear, but the year 6368 most probably corresponds to the period March 21, 860 to March 20, 861. (However, November 3 was a Sunday then, and not a Tuesday, as the text states.)

32 (opposite), Evangelist John, fol. 16r

32, facing page, in Arabic, fol. 15v



32, two folio pages from last quire of manuscript

After the rise of the Abbasid dynasty in 750, the Eastern Orthodox (Melchite) Church in the Near East increasingly adopted the Arabic language,[6] and thus the Greek Gospels were translated into Arabic.[7] Judging from scribal notes preserved in other manuscripts, the copying of Arab Christian books in the ninth century was centered at the two large monasteries of Saint Sabas and Saint Chariton on the outskirts of Jerusalem.[8] The Sinai Gospel book was most likely produced there, as well.

Outlined in the brown and red inks of the text, the volume's miniatures may be attributed to its anonymous scribe and compared in style to the illustrations of two other manuscripts that were also probably made in medieval Palestine: an Arabic copy of the Pauline Epistles dated 892, and a Greek book of medical plants now in Paris.[9] Portraits of the evangelists and of Christ were traditional for Gospel books and are found, for example, in the Syriac Rabbula Gospels of AD 586 and in a series of miniatures now at Princeton, roughly contemporary with those of the Sinai manuscript.[10] Their very prominent architectural frames, shaped like a basilical church with galleries, are more unusual. On the book's closing pages, the building reappears with a canopy-covered altar, depicted so that, by convention, its interior and exterior are visible at the same time.[11] Rather than representing a particular structure,[12] this picture would have reminded the reader that the Gospels are publicly read in church. The text of the Sinai manuscript includes rubrics that indicate the days when such readings took place.[13]

GRP

NOTES

1. Damianos 1999; Sophronios 1999.
2. Saint Petersburg, Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Ms. Q no. 537 (see Likhacheva 1965, pp. 365–70, pls. 9, 10; Moscow and Saint Petersburg 1977, vol. 1, p. 87, no. 113, with bibliog.).
3. Meïmaris 1985, p. 27 (Greek text), pp. 24–25 (Arabic text), figs. 19–21 and pls. 5–6, no. 16.
4. Maria Mavroudi notes: "There is a hole in the text. Arabic numerals record thousands first, then hundreds, then units, then decades. Beside 809, as it stands at present, the number originally could have been 819, 829, 839, 849, 859, 869, 879, 889, or 899."
5. Maria Mavroudi notes: "The Muslim month Muharram ca. 850 was about the month of April. But the Arabic 'N-u-n-b-r-s' (or at best 'N-u-f-b-r-s') is an otherwise unattested word and must reflect the Greek colloquial pronunciation 'Noemvris' (November) or something like it."
6. Griffith 1988.
7. Griffith 1985a.
8. Griffith 1985b, esp. pp. 37–45; Griffith 1989.
9. Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Ms. Arabic N.F. no. 327 (see Weitzmann 1943 and Leroy 1974, pp. 92–94, no. iv, pl. 28.1; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. grec 2179, known as the Paris Dioscorides (see Paris 1992, pp. 345–46, no. 256, with bibliog.).
10. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Plut. I, 56 (see Vatican City 2000, pp. 145, 148–53, no. 10, with bibliog.); Princeton, N.J., University Libraries, Ms. Garrett 6 (see New York 1997a, pp. 90–91, no. 43, with bibliog.).
11. On similar architectural representations in early medieval art, see Duval 1965.
12. Compare Spatharakis 1980–81, pp. 144, 146.
13. Kindly pointed out to me by Maria Mavroudi, University of California, Berkeley; compare Garitte 1972.

REFERENCES

Meïmaris 1985, p. 27 (Greek text), p. 24 (Arabic text), figs. 16, 17, pls. 3, 4, no. 14; Garidis 1993–94, pp. 373–74, figs. 12–15; Hunt 1998, pp. 129, 135.

Figure 116
Evangelist Matthew, Ms. Q. no. 537, single leaf, verso. Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia. (After Likhacheva 1965)

⁘ πε(ρὶ) ... κυρ(ιακῇ) τῶν ἀρετῶν. ⁘

Προσευχή ἐστι. κατὰ μὲν τὴν αὐτῆς ποιότητα. συνουσία καὶ ἕνωσις ἀν(θρώπ)ου καὶ θ(εο)ῦ· κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν. κόσμου σύστασις· θ(εο)ῦ καταλλαγή· δακρύων μήτηρ. καὶ πάλιν θυγάτηρ· ἁμαρτημάτων ἱλασμός· πειρασμῶν γέφυρα· θλίψεων μεσότοιχον· πολέμων θραῦσις· ἀγγέλων ἔργον· ἀ- ΚΗ

μακαρίας προσευχῆς:·

33 | *The Heavenly Ladder* (in Greek)

Saint John Climacus (before 579–ca. 650)

Twelfth century

Tempera and gold on parchment

Book: 18.7 × 15.6 × 10.5 cm (7⅜ × 6⅛ × 4⅛ in.)

CONDITION

Full red-morocco, blind-tooled leather over wooden boards with grooved edges and five large, silver, rounded bosses extant on each board. Painted designs on edges of textblock. Braided leather clasp hasps extant (lower with breaks). Greek-style worked endbands of metallic thread extant but broken, repaired in 2006. Sewing structure broken and lower board detached and quires loose (repaired). Scattered flake losses throughout textblock, particularly in areas of blue and green in border designs and in illuminations where pigments have been painted over gilding.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. 418)

ACCORDING TO HIS BIOGRAPHER, the author of *The Heavenly Ladder*, Saint John Climacus, was born around 579 and arrived in the Sinai at age sixteen to become a monk.[1] After forty years as a desert hermit, he was made the abbot of the Sinai monastery. A popular text in the Middle Ages, John Climacus's treatise on monastic virtues was translated into Latin and the several languages of Eastern Christianity.[2] Although directed to a monastic audience, the laity also appreciated its teachings, and two illustrated manuscripts were copied for prominent aristocrats, including the brother of Emperor Michael VII.[3]

Most decorated manuscripts of this text contain only a portrait of the author and an image of the heavenly ladder, similar to the Sinai icon of this subject shown herein (see cat. no. 48). A Vatican manuscript (Vat. cod. gr. 394)[4] of the late eleventh century and the present Sinai Codex illustrate each chapter separately. The allegorical illumination in the Vatican manuscript is more extensive, yet comparatively formulaic; that of the Sinai Codex is more direct, if sometimes elusive. The miniatures for chapter 8, on placidity and meekness, exemplify the approach taken (see below). Instead of personifying these abstract qualities in the manner of the Vatican Codex,[5] the Sinai manuscript depicts a virtuous monk seated and reading from a book on a lectern, equipped with a small hanging lamp for nocturnal vigils.[6] Other illustrations similarly refer to daily monastic life to ground the text in the lived experiences of its intended audience (see ills. on pages 206–7 and figs. 17, 18, and 20).[7]

33 (opposite), monks praying and reading, fol. 269r

33 (right), "On Placidity and Meekness," monk reading from lectern equipped with lamp for vigils, fol. 113v

Instead of an allegory of prayer, as in the Vatican version, the Sinai manuscript (see ill. on page 204) shows monks praying in a church, complete with ciborium over the altar, two templon icons of the Virgin and Christ, and a lector standing and reading from a book on a lectern to members of a monastic community who are in various attitudes of prayer.[8] With hands uplifted, two monks look toward the icons on the chancel screen and demonstrate praying with icons. Prayer, according to John Climacus, is "a dialogue and a union with God."[9] That dialogue with the divine is depicted or inscribed on several icons reproduced herein (see, for example, cat. nos. 2, 10, 25, 26, 53).

RSN

NOTES

1. A recent study is Chryssavgis 2004. Also see Alexander Kazhdan and Robert S. Nelson in *ODB*, s.v. "John Klimax"; Luibheid and Russell 1982.
2. Kallistos Ware in Luibheid and Russell 1982, pp. 67–68.
3. Alexander Kazhdan and Robert S. Nelson in *ODB*, s.v. "John Klimax," p. 1061; Anderson 1979.
4. Martin 1954, figs. 67–132.
5. Martin 1954, fig. 99.
6. Martin 1954, fig. 188.
7. See Robert S. Nelson, "Where God Walked and Monks Pray," herein, figs. 16–17, 19.
8. The miniature has often been evoked in discussions of the *templon* or chancel barrier—for example, in Peers 2004, p. 112 (with bibliog).
9. *PG*, vol. 88, col. 1129; Luibheid and Russell 1982, p. 274

REFERENCES

Martin 1954, pp. 87–104, Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, pp. 153–62.

33, frontispiece and exchange of letters between John Climacus and John of Raithu, fol. 2r

33. "On Gluttony," fol. 135v

33. "On Solitude," fol. 254r

33. "Homily to the Pastor," John Climacus teaching with icons of the Deesis above, fol. 209r

33. "On Slander," fol. 124v

ΙΩ Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ
ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΣ
ΜΡ ΘΥ
ΙC ΧC
ΙΩ Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ
Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΛΟΥΚΑΣ
Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ

34 | Gospel Lectionary

Middle to second half of the twelfth century

Tempera and gold on parchment

Book: 40 × 30.8 × 11.1 cm (15¾ × 12⅛ × 4⅜ in.)

CONDITION

Leather binding over wooden boards with Greek style endbands consisting of red, blue, and metallic gold thread (fully intact). Silver gilt overcover, with raised and engraved designs, attached with nails around all edges of boards and flexible linked chain mesh across spine width (with wire repairs). Parchment with yellow and white hair/flesh sides, with pronounced diagonal scraping marks. Design in excellent condition with flake losses, often occurring in conjunction with scraped preparation of parchment support. Scattered flake losses throughout.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. 208)

HEADPIECES SHAPED LIKE A π (the Greek letter pi) are found at the beginning of some texts within this lectionary, but this gold-ground Deesis composition on folio 1v is the only figural illumination in the manuscript.[1] As a Gospel lectionary, the manuscript comprises readings arranged for the feasts of the liturgical year.[2] For this reason, the Deesis includes the Four Evangelists in the corners of the page, in clockwise order from the upper left-hand corner, John, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, each holding a book to signify his authorship. The evangelists are cordoned off, as are all the figures on the page, by a patterned ribbon of red, yellow, and blue. The center register presents the Deesis triad of an enthroned Christ—who also holds a book—along with the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist, both of whom stand. These flanking figures raise their hands to Christ in a gesture of entreaty. This core group is distinguished by their relative scale and the unity provided by the horizontal register on which they are disposed.

Such compositional groupings of Deesis and evangelists are not unprecedented,[3] but the solution arrived at in this Gospel lectionary is unique. The composition may derive part of its meaning from the lectionary tradition, but its visual models are not found in that context. The compartmentalization of the different figures, half length or full, is suggestive of a horizontally extended composition most commonly found on templon beams, in an arrangement similar to the beam from Sinai with Deesis and scenes of the life of Saint Eustratios (cat. no. 21).[4] Not only does the arrangement of Deesis and evangelists relate to group depictions in other media but it also reflects traditional ideas about the hierarchy of the evangelists. John and Matthew occupy the top register, while the "junior" evangelists, who were not original disciples, are placed at the bottom of the page. This arrangement reflects the order of Gospels within the manuscript. Such orders of precedence are also found in monumental art.[5] The page in this Gospel lectionary was determined, then, not as much by the textual contents as by the context in which the lectionary was used.[6]

GP

NOTES

1. On the Deesis, see Cutler 1987.
2. See Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, p. 166; Robert F. Taft in *ODB*, s.v. "Lectionary."
3. See Galavaris 1979, pp. 115–19.
4. See Firath 1969, p. 163, where the combination of Deesis and evangelists is found, but in a different order.
5. See Borsook 1990, p. 9.
6. Galavaris 1979, p. 119; Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, p. 169.

REFERENCE

Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, pp. 166–70.

34 (opposite), Deesis with Four Evangelists, fol. 1v

35 | Cross with Scenes of Moses

Sixth century, Syria or Palestine(?)

Bronze with chased inscriptions

H: 112.1 cm (44⅛ in.); W: 79.4 cm (31¼ in.); Th: 1.27 cm (½ in.)

INSCRIBED

On upright: † Ἐγέν|ετο δὲ|τῇ ἡμ|έρα τῇ|τρίτῃ|γενη|θέντ|ος πρ|ὸς ὄρ|θρον|ἐγίν|οντ|ο φω|νὲ κ(αὶ)|ἀστ|ραπὲ|καὶ|νεφ|έλε|γνο|φόδι|ς ἐπ᾽ ὄ|ρος Σι|να, καὶ|φονὴ| τῆς σ|άλπιγ|γος ἤ|χι μέ|γα· καὶ|ἐπτοή|θη πᾶς|ὁ λαὸς|ἐν τῇ π|αρεμβο|λῇ, κ(αὶ)| ἐξ|ήγαγεν|Μωϋσῆς|τὸν λα|ὸν ἐκ τ|ῆς παρε|μβολῆς|εἰς τὴν σ|υνάντι|σιν τοῦ|Θεοῦ (And it came to pass on the third day; about dawn there were voices and lightnings and dark clouds on Mount Sinai, and the voice of the trumpet sounded loud, and all the people in the camp were terrified. And Moses led forth the people out of the camp to meet God,); on arms: κ(αὶ) παρέστησαν ὑπὸ τὸ ὄρος τὸ Σινα.|τὸ δὲ Σινα ὄρος ἐκαπνίζετο ὅλον διὰ τὸ|καταβεβηκέναι τὸν Θ(εὸ)ν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸ ἐν πυρί.|τὰ σὰ ἐκ τῶν σῶν σοι προσφέρομεν, κ(ύρι)ε.|ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας Θεοδώρας τῆς φ(ι)λ(ο)χρ(ίστου) καὶ ὑπὲρ|ἀναπαύσεως Πρόκλου κ(αὶ) Δομετίας, ἀμήν. (And they halted at the foot of Mount Sinai. And the whole Mount Sinai was issuing forth smoke, since God had descended upon it in fire. Thine own of Thine own, we offer Thee, O Lord. For the salvation of Theodora the Christ-loving and for the repose of Proclos and Dometia, Amen.); on base of upright: κ(ύρι)ε μνήσ|θητι τῷ γρά|ψαντ[ι] † (Lord, remember the engraver)[1]

CONDITION

Top flange cast separately and attached. Broken U-shape strap (now in two pieces) would have originally formed a loop for hanging. Bottom drilled out for mounting device; breaks and drill holes through front inscriptions suggest that attachment was not original. Bottom left corner, serif missing.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE SINAI CROSS, ONE OF THE LARGEST PRESERVED from early Byzantium, was originally ornamented with gemstones that dangled from the lower edge of its arms; preserved spikes supported candles along the upper surface. We may assume that this was one of many such donations made to the monastery and that Sinai must have had an impressive collection of medieval liturgical vessels and implements. The chance survival of this cross may be attributed to its manufacture in bronze, a relatively inexpensive material.

The epigraphy and shape of the cross suggest a sixth-century date and an origin in Syria or Palestine.[2] Similar wide, flaring arms and corner serifs appear on metal crosses from the fifth to seventh century from Syria and Egypt.[3] Because of its size and weight, it is likely that the cross was stationary, not portable, and was initially placed on top of the central templon of the church, where it may have been one of many.[4] There, its shape echoed the broad, flaring crosses of the church's original chancel plaques (see fig. 120). The inscriptions on the Moses cross from the book of Exodus (19:16–18) and from the Orthodox liturgy support the association with the sanctuary entrance. They refer to the manifestations of God—his revelation to the Israelites in the desert and the mystical transformation of the offered bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The celebrating priest invoked the inscribed prayer, "Thine own of Thine own, we offer Thee, O Lord," between the Words of Institution and the Epiclesis in the Byzantine Anaphoras of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil.[5] This prayer is also inscribed on the sixth-century altar table in Hagia Sophia, Constantinople; the lintel of a church in Syria; the rim of a liturgical chalice also from Syria (cat. no. 36); and a baptismal font. The prayer appropriately marks a cross intended

35. detail

35, detail with Moses loosening his sandal

Figure 117
Mosaic with Moses loosening his sandal, sixth century. East wall of main church. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

35, detail with Moses receiving the Law

Figure 118
Mosaic with Moses receiving the Law, sixth century. East wall of main church. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

for the threshold of the church's most sacred liturgical space.[6] The sketchy scenes incised into the arms of the cross — Moses receiving the Law and Moses removing his sandals before the Burning Bush — replicate the mosaics on the east wall of the sanctuary (albeit in reverse order) and further associate the cross with the main church rather than subsidiary chapels (figs. 117–19; also see fig. 15).

At its conclusion, the inscription records the names of Theodora, Proclos, and Dometia and their desire for salvation. Many liturgical objects of the period commemorate donors in a similar manner. The identity of the donor, Theodora, cannot be determined.

SEJG

NOTES

1. Translation from Weitzmann and I. Ševčenko 1963, with changes.
2. Weitzmann and I. Ševčenko 1963, pp. 397–98.
3. See, for example, the crosses from the Hama and Phela Treasures in the Walters Art Museum and Dumbarton Oaks Collections, respectively; M. M. Mango 1986, nos. 8, 65. For a silver cross found in excavations in the Temple of Luxor, see Strzygowski 1973, p. 340, no. 7201, pl. 39.
4. A similar configuration, based on a description by Paul the Silentiary, has been proposed for the sanctuary screen in Hagia Sophia, Constantinople. See S. G. Xydis 1947. Amantos (1928) recorded the location of the Moses cross in the chapel of Saint James; Weitzmann sited the cross in the Chapel of the Forty Martyrs of Sinai (see fig. 119). See Amantos 1928, p. 47 n. 2; Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973, pl. 99. Weitzmann first suggested the location above the templon in Weitzmann and I. Ševčenko 1963, p. 390.
5. Brightman 1896, p. 329, 7; Taft 1996.
6. See Weitzmann and I. Ševčenko 1963, pp. 393–94. For the altar table in Hagia Sophia, see Cedrenus 1838, p. 677c. For the lintel of Church no. 5 in Il-Anderîn (Androna), Syria, see H. C. Butler 1908, pp. 50–51. For the "Tyler" or "Riha" chalice, see cat. no. 36. For the baptismal font, see Saller 1941, pp. 88, 252–53, pls. 46.2, 115.1, 115.2

REFERENCES

Amantos 1928, p. 47 n. 2, fig. 2; Rabino 1938, pp. 33, 106, no. 71; A. Grabar 1969, Weitzmann and I. Ševčenko 1963; I. Ševčenko 1966, p. 264; Washington 1994.

Figure 119
Chapel of the Forty Martyrs with the cross in situ. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

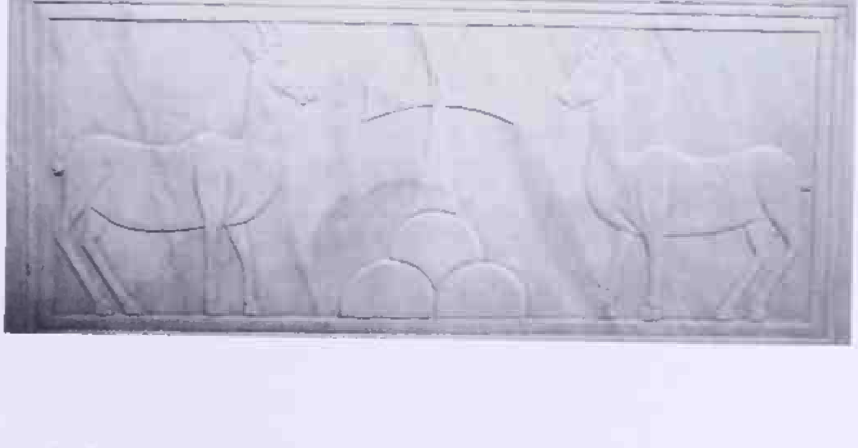


Figure 120
Chancel panel in the sanctuary of the main church. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

ΟΜЄΝΚЄ ✠ ΤΑϹΑЄ

36 | The "Riha" Chalice

527–65, Constantinople or Syria

Hammered silver with inscription in niello and gilding on upper turned border

H: 17.5 cm (6⅞ in.); Diam: 16.8 cm (6⅝ in.); 527.7 grams

INSCRIBED

† ΤΑ CΑ ΕΚ ΤΩΝ CΩΝ CΟΙ ΠΡΟCΦΕΡΟΜΕΝ Κ(ύρι)Ε (Thine own of Thine own we offer Thee, O Lord)

CONDITION

Before conservation treatments in 1976 the chalice was thoroughly blackened and the foot was bent. Now in good condition. It has been polished, but tarnish remains in recessed areas.

The Byzantine Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1955.18)

THE OVERALL DIMENSIONS, the finely balanced cup and knob, the flaring foot, and the broadly spaced and elegantly proportioned inscription make this chalice the finest of the eight from a set of liturgical church silver, reconstructed as the Kaper Koraon Treasure.[1] The words in the inscription band are common in the Greek liturgies and are reported as being used by Justinian for the dedicatory inscription on the altar of Hagia Sophia. What is even more interesting in the present context is that the inscription appears in precisely the same form on the large bronze cross at Mount Sinai (cat. no. 35).[2] The five control stamps inside the foot include the monograms of Justinian (r. 527–65) and are the earliest among the stamped objects within the reconstructed treasure.

In this type of chalice, the cup and foot were made by hammering and were attached to each other by a soldered silver collar. The whole was subsequently smoothed by a lathe. Chalices and patens are the central liturgical objects, and by the seventh century they were designated as pairs, known as *diskopoteria*.[3] However, the evidence of church treasures and inventories indicates that chalices outnumbered patens by at least two to one.

GB

36. detail from inside foot of chalice, showing monogram of Justinian

NOTES

1. M. M. Mango 1986. The chalice is said to have been found in Riha, Syria.
2. Weitzmann and I. Ševčenko 1963, p. 393.
3. M. M. Mango 1990, p. 248.

REFERENCES

Volbach 1921, p. 17; Paris 1931, no. 407; Peirce and Tyler 1934, p. 124, pl. 170; Bréhier 1936, p. 85; Ross 1962, pp. 10–12, no. 9, pl. 10; M. M. Mango 1986, pp. 144–46, no. 30.

+ΥΠΕΡ·ΑΝΑΠΑΥCΕΩCCΕΡΓΙΑCΙΩΑΝΝΟΥΚΘΕΟΔΟCΙΟΥCΩΤΗΡΙΑCΜΕ
ΟΥΚΝΟΝΝΟΥΚΤΩΝΑΥΤΩΝΤΕΚΝΩΝ

37 The "Riha" Paten

565–78, Constantinople or Syria

Silver repoussé with gilding and inscription in niello

H: 3.2cm (1¼ in.); Diam: 35 cm (13¾ in.); 904 grams

INSCRIBED

† ΥΠΕΡ ΑΝΑΠΑΥCΕΩC CΕΡΓΙΑC ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ Κ(αὶ) ΘΕΟΔΟCΙΟΥ Κ(αὶ) CΩΤΗΡΙΑC ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ Κ(αὶ) ΝΟΝΝΟΥ Κ(αὶ) ΤΩΝ ΑΥΤΩΝ ΤΕΚΝΩΝ
(For the peace of the soul of Sergia, daughter of Ioannes, and of Theodosius, and for the salvation of Megalos and Nonnous and of their children)

CONDITION

Fragile at rim, areas where silver has broken through, and areas of old repair. Some breaks, cracks, scratches, and dents. Gilding very worn on parts of altar cloth, and apostles' clothes. Paten very weak where flat part of plate rises to form side of dish.

The Byzantine Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1924.5)

NOTES

1. M. M. Mango 1986, no. 36.
2. Marlia Mundell Mango in Sotheby's 1990, lot. 43.

REFERENCES

Ross 1962, pp. 12–15, no. 10, pls. 11–13; Wessel 1964, pp. 9–18; Schrader 1979; New York 1979, pp. 611–12, no. 547, pl. 16; M. M. Mango 1986, pp. 165–70, no. 35; Toynbee and Painter 1986, no. 80; Caillet 1995, p. 43, fig. 35; Durand 1999, p. 53, ill. on p. 47.

A SYMMETRICAL COMPOSITION representing the Communion of the Apostles is inscribed into the center of the paten. Behind a cloth-covered altar, the cross-nimbed figure of Christ, shown twice, administers the bread on the right and the wine on the left to two groups of six apostles each. They stand on either side of an altar that holds a chalice, a paten, and two wineskins. In the exergue below are two more liturgical vessels. The architectural setting controls and unifies the vivid narrative created by the animated apostles. The two spiral columns that support an architrave with a shell niche mark the "holy sphere" and the sanctuary reserved for the two figures of Christ. The four, possibly five, control stamps with imperial portraits and monograms on the reverse are those of Justin II (r. 565–78).

Patens in different sizes were used to display and carry eucharistic bread. Only a few preserved plates represent the Communion rite itself. A very similar depiction of the communion of the twelve apostles now appears on a paten in the Archaeological Museum, Istanbul.[1] In a third, fragmentary example in the De Menil Collection in Houston, only Peter and Paul stand beside a polygonal altar, with a single figure of Christ at the center of the plate.[2]

Vessels and containers made of silver were fabricated on a wide scale for domestic and donated cult objects. Pious individuals presented silver implements to churches all over the early Byzantine Empire. The purpose of those donations far exceeded the immediate needs of the churches, and the inscribed votive dedications reveal the relationship between donors and their religious aspirations. Silver vessels were gifted to fulfill a vow, or—as in the case of the paten in question—to obtain salvation and commemorate family members.

From inventories, donor lists, and more than a dozen buried treasures that have been found, we gain a detailed picture of the types of liturgical implements that existed during the early Byzantine period. Nearly all of these treasures (including this paten and cat. nos. 36 and 38) derive from village, rather than urban, churches. They demonstrate the wealth of local donors and provide valuable evidence from the middle or even lower end of the social scale. One can scarcely imagine how precious—in quantity and quality—were the church treasures, enriched by imperial gifts, of the capital cities.

GB

37, detail

38 | The "Riha" Flabellum

565–78, Constantinople or Syria

Cast, engraved, and partially gilded silver

Diam: 30.9 cm (12³⁄₁₆ in.)

CONDITION

Large loss to peacock-feather border on right. Gilding is very worn. Light tarnish overall, esp. in interstices at tips of feathers. Reverse: old solder is visible on top feather and along break at left side.

The Byzantine Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1936.23)

WHAT MAY LOOK LIKE A MIRROR AT FIRST GLANCE is actually a liturgical fan (Latin, *flabellum*; Greek, *rhipidion*), consisting of a silver disc with a border of sixteen peacock feathers. The tang at its base has a groove, indicating that the disc was made to be attached to a staff, probably wooden. Both faces of the disc depict the tetramorph, a four-winged creature whose wings are covered with eyes, and who has the heads of a lion, a man, an ox, and an eagle, and human hands and feet. At the sides are a pair of fiery wheels. The gilding applied to the tetramorph, the wheels, and the border enhances the three-dimensionality of the shallow relief. The four control stamps on the reverse of the tang indicate that the silver fan was stamped before it was decorated and was fabricated during the reign of Justin II (r. 565–78).

The subject depicted, the vision of Ezekiel (EZEK. 1:5, 10), is common for liturgical fans of all periods and represents the heavenly attendants that are evoked in the liturgy. Written sources attest the use of fans in the liturgy as early as the end of the fourth century. According to the Apostolic Constitutions (VIII, 12:3–4), two deacons stood by the altar and waved fans made of parchment, peacock feathers, or cloth to keep flies from the bread and wine during Mass. What may have begun with actual fans made of feathers has here been transformed into a liturgical implement of high ceremonial status.

The Dumbarton Oaks fan is said to have been found at Riha, Syria, along with the chalice and paten also shown here (cat. nos. 36–37), and all three liturgical objects are presumably parts of an original set of church silver comprising over fifty pieces. This flabellum, and an almost identical one in the Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, are the earliest existing liturgical fans.[1]

GB

NOTE

1. M. M. Mango 1986, no. 31.

REFERENCES

Dodd 1961, p. 96, no. 21; Ross 1962, pp. 15–17, no. 11, pls. 9, 15; Dodd 1968, p. 147; Kurt Wessell in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, s.v. "Flabellum"; Dodd 1973, pp. 35–48, figs. 29–30, 32, 33; New York 1979, pp. 617–18, no. 553; M. M. Mango 1986, pp. 150–54, no. 32

38, detail

39 Candelabrum with Saints and Mythical Beasts

Eleventh/twelfth century

Cast bronze soldered with lead

H: 158.8 cm (62½ in.); Diam (base): 48.3 cm (19 in.); Diam (top plate): 44.5 cm (17½ in.)

INSCRIBED

Ο Α(γιος) ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟC (Saint George);
Ο Α(γιος) ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC (Saint Theodore);
Ο Α(γιος) ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟC (Saint Demetrius);
Ο Α(γιος) ΠΡΟΚΟΠΙΟC (Saint Procopius)

CONDITION

Candelabrum consists of removable drip pan and plate fitted over a finial soldered to the shaft. Plate for candles lacks three of its prongs and shows evidence of former repair. Shaft (originally three separate pieces) has been soldered together and soldered to a base with three feet.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE FEET OF THREE HYBRID CREATURES support this tall, handsome, bronze candelabrum. Lions, griffons, and variations on the Persian *senmurv* (see detail, below left), a composite mythological creature, decorate the lobes of the base and several sections of the shaft, and bands of floral ornament twist around the large oval in the center. Directly above is a segment with medallion portraits of the four military saints—George (see detail, below right), Demetrius, Procopius, and Theodore. At the top of the candelabrum, leopards chase rabbits around the perimeter of the drip pan, and a dozen spikes for candles—less the three now missing—surround a single central pricket and candle. Though indebted to contemporary Islamic art, the ornament is Byzantine and related to twelfth-century metal bowls in Russia.[1]

The images of the four saints on the shaft are icons in this context as in any other. Placed in the upper part of the candelabrum for ease of sight and veneration, these armored warriors, wielding shields and spears, guard the lights above and what they illumine.

A possible pendant to the Sinai candelabrum may be an undecorated candelabrum of similar size and design that is presently in use in the chapel of the Sinai Fathers.[2] Known as the *manoualia dodekaphotia* for their twelve candles, such pairs of large candelabra, normally made of bronze, appear to have been a feature of well-endowed churches and monasteries,[3] but the only other examples extant are two at the Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos, of similar date.[4] Normally placed before the templon and major icons, the *manoualia* were lit on special occasions. At the twelfth-century Constantinopolitan monastery of Kecharitome, candelabra with twelve candles were set "in front of the holy icon of the Mother of God set out for veneration" on the feast of her birth.[5] In the following century, four *dodekaphotia* illumined the center of the nave of the monastery of Auxentios during the annual all-night vigil for its patron saint.[6]

RSN

NOTES

1. Darkevich 1975.
2. Height 142 cm (55⅞ in.).
3. The late-fourteenth-century inventory of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople describes *manoualia* made of gilded silver and other precious materials: Parani, Pitarakis, and Spieser 2003, p. 161 (with bibliog.).
4. Bouras 1989–90.
5. Gautier 1985, pp. 108–9; J. Thomas and Hero 2000, vol. 2, p. 697. At the Pantocrator Monastery in Constantinople, the *dodekaphotia* stood in front of the icon of the Savior: Gautier 1974, pp. 38–39; J. Thomas and Hero 2000, vol. 2, p. 741.
6. Dmitrievskij 1895–1917, p. 788; J. Thomas and Hero 2000, vol. 3, p. 1229.

REFERENCES

Bouras 1989–90; Laskarina Bouras in *DMA*, s.v. "Lighting Devices"; Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos 1990, pp. 263–78; Laskarina Bouras in *ODB*, s.v. "Lighting, Ecclesiastical."

39, detail with *senmurv*

39, detail with Saint George

40 Lamp Stand

Late tenth or eleventh century, Egypt

Cast bronze

H (with finial): 166.7 cm (65⅝ in.);
Diam (base): 38.7 cm (15¼ in.)

INSCRIBED

In three bands on the upper and lower shaft of the midsection, and at the top of the base repeat, nearly verbatim, in Arabic, "Perfect blessing and complete favor; perfect blessing and complete favor and happiness." A fourth inscription on this lamp, written in a more cursory manner, perhaps reads, "Perfect blessing to its owner."[1]

CONDITION

Three-legged lampstand consists of separate cast elements assembled with threaded rod that runs the length of the shaft and is fastened with bolts at top and bottom. Decorative motifs created with chasing and punchwork. Loss to edge of separate pan at top of stand. The candleholders on each of the trays are later additions.[2]

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

FURNITURE IN THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC WORLD was generally portable and often adaptable to a variety of settings, both secular and religious. Stands fabricated of copper alloys such as brass—and intended to support oil lamps—are one of the most common forms of surviving furniture.[3] One specific type of lamp stand, with a wide, footed base supporting a shaftlike midsection, which in turn carries a tray, was in common use from the tenth through the thirteenth century in an area extending from Egypt and Syria to eastern Iran. Such lamp stands were made of individually cast, interlocking multiple parts and were probably intended to be not only easily portable but adjustable to different heights through the addition of balusterlike and cylindrical elements to the middle section. This lamp stand—one of a pair from the Chapel of Saint Stephen (at the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai)—fits within this genre (see fig. 122).

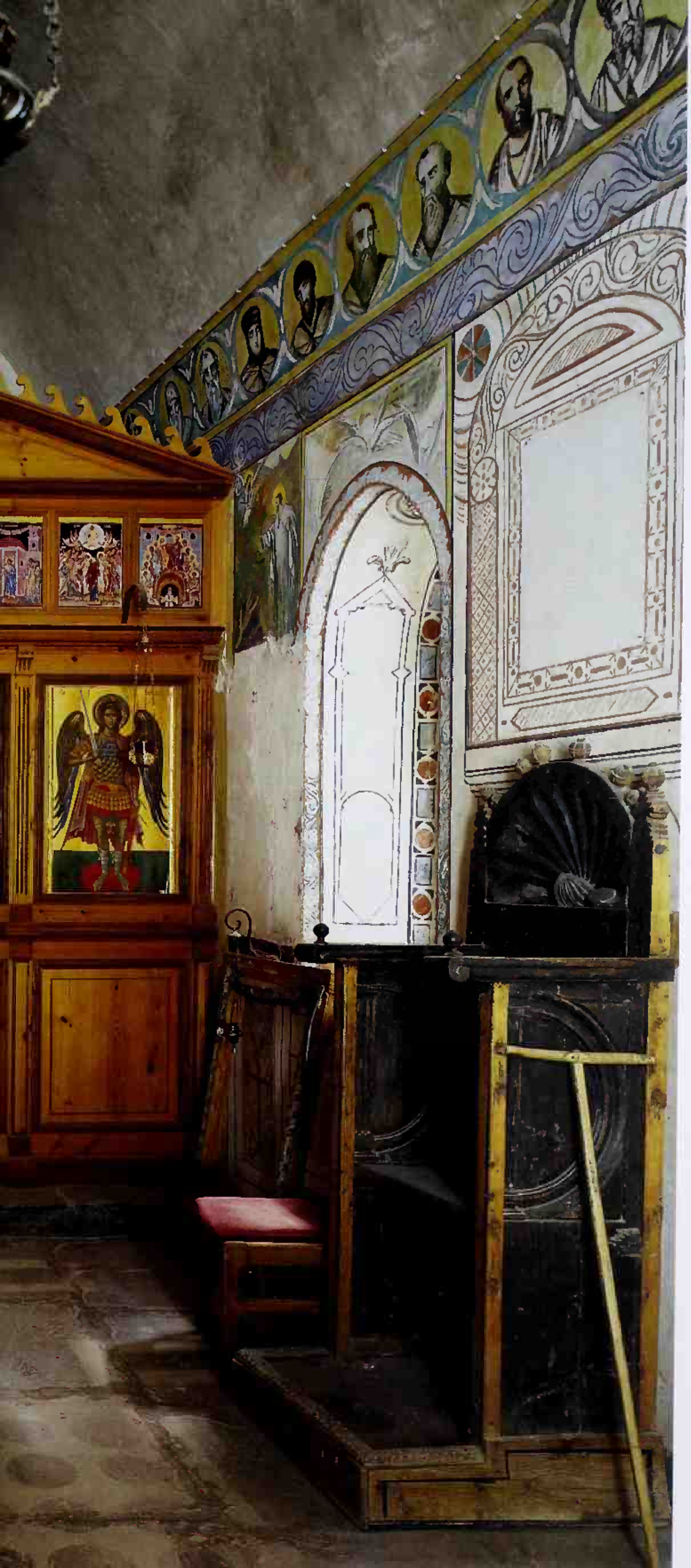
Its ornament (leafy designs enclosed by a heart-shaped device); the decorative technique (punched background); and the style of Arabic inscription (an angular Kufic script with large, broad letters and leafy and abstract designs in the interstices)—rather than the lamp stand's shape—help to associate it with Egypt under the rule of the Fatimid dynasty (969–1171), and more specifically the late tenth through the eleventh century.[4] The inscriptions provide formulaic blessings to the anonymous owner.[5]

Such lamp stands were evidently well known throughout the Fatimid caliphate. A hoard excavated at Caesarea (modern Israel) in 1995, and datable to the late tenth or early eleventh century, revealed a number of bronze lamp stands.[6] Nasir-i Khusraw, a medieval Persian traveler and writer who visited the Fatimid empire between 1046 and 1050, describes a shrine in Tyre (modern Lebanon) as being furnished with carpets and mats, hanging lamps, and lamp stands (*cheraghdan*) of gold and silver.[7]

The functionality, versatility, and evident popularity of this type of lamp stand is demonstrated by its depiction in illustrated manuscripts from late-twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iraq, where it supports several different types of oil lamps. The stands appear beside seated or standing figures, always in a secular, generally domestic context, as for example in an Arabic rendition of *De Materia Medica* by Dioscorides, dated 621/1224 (fig. 121).[8] It seems likely that this Fatimid lamp stand and its mate, although of a high quality, were probably household items that at some point were brought to the Chapel of Saint Stephen, where they were further transformed into candle holders to illuminate important icons.

LK

Figure 121
Two physicians preparing medicine, from an Arabic rendition of *De Materia Medica* by Dioscorides, 1224. Single leaf from a manuscript. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (F1932.20).



NOTES

1. The reading of the inscriptions is based solely on available photographs.
2. One of the lamps was reproduced in the 1938 guidebook to Saint Catherine's (Rabino 1938, pl. 11, fig. 1), without any appurtenance atop the tray, while a later photograph from the archives of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition shows a pricket rising from the tray (see Baer 1983, fig. 10).
3. See Baer 1983, pp. 10–18, on the evolution of the lamp stand. Also, see Ward 1993, pp. 60–64, for a general discussion of the lamps and lamp stands from Egypt.
4. In the early tenth century the Isma'ili, Shi'ite Fatimid dynasty came to power in North Africa and soon expanded its authority to Sicily and parts of Egypt. The Fatimid armies completed their conquest of Egypt in 969, and in that year Cairo was founded as the new capital, becoming an important cultural center that was to rival Baghdad. From Egypt the Fatimids extended their domain to Syria. On Fatimid art in general, see, for example, Contadini 1998; more specifically on the style of Fatimid epigraphy, see Haase 1999. Also on epigraphic style as it relates to Fatimid metalwork, see Grube 1965.
5. It is interesting to note that the choice of words is quite different from the good wishes, also in Arabic, found on roughly contemporary Iranian lamp stands and other related bronzes. See Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 85. Instead, the inscriptions on this lamp stand represent an abbreviated version of the inscriptions on a Fatimid bronze bowl; see Grube 1965, p. 141.
6. Presumed to have belonged to an affluent private family, for there was no evidence to suggest a mosque or other religious institution; see Tel Aviv 1996, pp. 51–55.
7. Tel Aviv 1996, p. 22, where the author mistranslates *cheraghdan* as "candlestick," and indeed lamp stands seem to be consistently misidentified as candlesticks throughout the text. See Nasir-i Khusraw 1976, p. 24. On the meaning of *cheraghdan*, as literally "lamp on stand," or a "lamp stand," see Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 239, 384, although he suggests that *cheragh-paye* is the correct classical term for a lamp stand supported by articulated feet. The account of eleventh-century traveler Nasir-i Khusraw has been translated into English. Thackston 1986 (see, esp., p. 16, where he translates *cheraghdanha* as "lanterns").
8. Also two illustrations in *Kitab al-Diryaq* (*Book of Antidotes*), dated 595/1199, in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. arabe 2964; see Farès 1953. Other examples occur in three roughly contemporary versions of the *Maqamat* (Assemblies) of al-Hariri in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. arabe 5847, dated 634/1237, fol. 13v; in the Suleimaniye Library, Istanbul, Esad Efendi 2961, c. 1242–58, fol. 14v; and in the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, C-23, c. 1240, pp. 29, 90. These *Maqamat* illustrations are collectively available on microfiche. See O. Grabar 1984, microfiche 1F9, 1E12, 1F3, 3G12.

REFERENCES

Rabino 1938, pl. 11, fig. 1; Baer 1983.

Figure 122

Fatimid lamp stands in front of the iconostasis in the Chapel of Saint Stephen. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Bruce White

IC XC

41 Epitrachelion with Feast Scenes

Last quarter of the fifteenth century, Constantinople or northern Greece

Metallic threads (probably gold and mixed silver alloy) on fabric support (probably linen) and red damask

304.8 × 12.4 × 2.5 cm (120 × 4⅞ × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED
Inscriptions label each scene. In the interlace at the end of the stole with monogram: MATΘAI(o)C IEP(o)M(ó)NAX(o)C (Hieromonk Matthew)

CONDITION
Excellent condition overall. Some abrasion and loss of the silk threads, primarily restricted to outside borders. The linen support beneath red silk and metal threads shows through in several places. The embroideries were likely remounted to a new supporting fabric at least once. Losses in selected areas reveal preliminary stitchwork. Clipped letters on one side indicate that the stole has been trimmed in the course of repair. Green corrosion product on two lower decorative pendants. Flat foil thread used for metallic borders.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

41, detail

THIS PRIEST'S STOLE, OR *epitrachelion*, is typical of liturgical vestments produced in the late and post-Byzantine periods. When Byzantine liturgical vestments began to be ornamented with figural embroideries in the late twelfth century, the Dodekaorton, or cycle of twelve feasts, was a leading subject for such decoration. These scenes, which represent the Gospel story in synoptic form, were especially appropriate for liturgical costume, as they parallel the allegorical exposition of the liturgy as a recapitulation of Christ's incarnate life.[1] A number of stoles ornamented with the Dodekaorton survive from the fifteenth century,[2] and the 1396 inventory of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople describes a gold-embroidered stole showing feasts of Christ.[3] The neck of this *epitrachelion* joins the two columns of Christological scenes with an image of the Holy Trinity in the guise of the three angels who visit Abraham at Mamre.[4]

In practice, the scenes forming the cycle often number more or less than twelve, being frequently supplemented with episodes from the Passion, as here. The cycle of scenes depicted on this stole presents some additional peculiarities. While eleven of the twelve canonical images are present, the final one, the Koimesis, or Dormition of the Virgin, is missing. Furthermore, whereas the scenes normally appear sequentially, as they occur in the life of Christ, here the Baptism of Christ and the Transfiguration are placed out of narrative sequence to accord with the dates of their celebration on January 6 and August 6, respectively.[5] Finally, the Last Supper, a frequent component of the expanded cycle, is here replaced by a pair of images showing the Communion of the Apostles. Rather than narrating the event of the institution of the Eucharist, as the image of the Last Supper does, these images show Christ administering the sacrament to his disciples just as a contemporary Orthodox bishop would have done to his subordinate clergy.[6]

41 (opposite), detail

The ornamental fields of interlace at the end of the stole contain letters spelling out a name and title: Matthew, Priest and Monk. Although he cannot be identified, the style of the embroidery suggests a tie to Constantinople. Similar ornamental interlace, sometimes including double-headed eagles, is found on a group of stoles linked to the circle of the patriarchate of Constantinople in the decades before 1500.[7] The ornamental vocabulary of the Sinai stole is especially striking. The scenes appear within interlaced roundels with crosses decorating the smaller loops between each pair. At the sides appear heart-shaped knots, which terminate in the confronted heads of birds and beasts. The tiny motifs between the animal heads suggest artistic sources remote from late Byzantine embroidery. Between each pair of bird heads is a tiny, vestigial representation of a fountain, recalling the fonts from which birds drink in early Christian frescoes and mosaics (fig. 123).[8] The other motif, a pearl suspended between the mouths of two beasts, echoes Chinese silks showing dragons in pursuit of flaming pearls (fig. 124).[9] Both motifs, of course, are here thoroughly divorced from their original cultural meanings and serve only to add richness and delight to the vestment.

WW

NOTES

1. On the narrative and liturgical aspects of the twelve feasts, see Kitzinger 1988, Spieser 1991, esp. pp. 576–78, and Spieser 1999.
2. Compare a fifteenth-century *epitrachelion* with sixteen feast scenes at Vatopaidi. Maria Theocharis in *Great Monastery of Vatopaidi* 1998, vol. 2, pp. 437–38, no. 9.
3. Miklosich and Müller 1860–90, vol. 2, p. 568. Compare the stoles preserved at Staraia Lagoda and Putna in Romania (Millet 1939–47) and at Vatopaidi on Mount Athos (Theocharis in *Great Monastery of Vatopaidi* 1998). Millet published, in addition to the Vatopaidi *epitrachelion*, two similar stoles from Romania—one from the monastery of Bistrița (currently in the National Historical Museum in Bucharest) and one with the donor portrait of Alexandru cel Bun and his consort Marina (from Staraia Ladoga, now presumed lost). The latter can be dated, from its portraits, to between 1421 and 1432. Millet 1939–47, pp. 6–7, pls. 5, 8–17.
4. Genesis 18:1–15.
5. This displacement of scenes based on the liturgical calendar is also encountered on the stole of the *skeuophylax* Peter at the Great Lavra on Mount Athos. Millet 1939–47, p. 54
6. On the iconography of the Communion of the Apostles, see Walter 1982, pp. 184–96; Gerstel 1999, pp. 49–52.
7. Millet 1939–47, pp. 13–14. One of these stoles, at the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, bears the inscription of Bishop Joachim of Drama, twice patriarch of Constantinople (1498–1502 and 1504–5) under Sultan Beyazid II. Gedeon 1996, pp. 493–95, 497–98.
8. Compare, for example, the paired doves with fountains in the fifth-century mosaics of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna. Deichmann 1958, figs. 26–27.
9. Compare the motif as found on thirteenth-century *kesi* panels from central Asia; New York 1997b, pp. 54, 75–79, nos. 17, 18.

REFERENCE
Theocharis 1990, pp. 238–39, 252, fig. 13.

Figure 123 (right top)
Mosaic with two birds drinking from a cup, fifth century. Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, Italy.

Figure 124 (right bottom)
Dragons Chasing Flaming Pearls (detail), Central Asia, thirteenth century or earlier. Silk tapestry (*kesi*). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Cecile E. Mactaggart Gift and Rogers Fund, 1987 (1987.8).

41 (opposite), detail

ΚΥ
Η ΑΓΙ
ΑΙΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ
ΚΥΔΕΥΟΜΕΝΗ ΥΠΟ ΤΑ ΑΓΓΕΛ

HOLY SITE

God said, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."
EXODUS 3:5

[In modern space] every place is equal to every other. MARTIN HEIDEGGER

The Sinai is not modern. Neither grid, graph, nor map, it is where God met Moses on hallowed ground. Icons from Sinai depict the place the monks call "God-trodden." The concluding section of this exhibition presents the monastery that the emperor Justinian dedicated to the Virgin in the sixth century and explores the monastic experience more generally. Later monks also venerated Saint Catherine. Her relics at the monastery attracted pilgrims from many regions and ultimately gave a new name to the monastery. After the Middle Ages, changing conventions of representation led to new topographical views of the Sinai.

Figure 125 (opposite) Triptych with Virgin of the Burning Bush and the Burial of Saint Catherine, sixteenth century(?) (detail, cat. no. 58).

Η ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩϹΙϹ ΤΟΥ ϹΩΤΗΡΟϹ

42 | Transfiguration with Scenes of Monastic Life

Georgios Klontzas

1603, Candia, Crete (?)

Tempera and silver leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

64.8 × 40.5 × 3.4 cm (25 1/2 × 15 15/16 × 1 5/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Η ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩCIC ΤΟΥ CΩΤΗΡΟC (The Metamorphosis of the Savior); **ΧΕΙΡ ΓΕΩ(ρ)ΓΙΟΥ ΚΛΟΝΤΖΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΡΗΤΟC ΑΧΓ.** (By the hand of Georgios Klontzas of Crete, 1603)

CONDITION

Gilding restricted to upper register. Uneven varnish layers. Frame consists of applied wooden strips. All sides of panel have been painted orange.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS ICON IS ONE OF SEVERAL by Georgios Klontzas that belong to the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai.[1] The Cretan painter never traveled to Sinai but depicted the monastery and its surrounding landscape in at least two other icons—the Spada and the Yorkshire triptychs.[2] He thus developed a characteristic shorthand for the monastery buildings and the Orthodox monks inhabiting them. Although the architectural setting is generic and classicizing, it nonetheless suggests the Justinianic monastery through the repeated depiction of small chapels and the ascending/descending levels of its pictorial surface.[3] The scene of the Transfiguration, or Metamorphosis, at the top of the icon also refers to the sixth-century apse mosaic in the *katholikon* (see figs. 15, 31). Klontzas utilizes Palaeologan iconography for his composition, with an expanded narrative to the right and left of the central scene and emphasis on the "uncreated light" that surrounds the figure of Christ.[4] Elijah and Moses, Old Testament witnesses to the Transfiguration, provide important examples for the contemplative life.

The lower two-thirds of the icon represents moments of daily life within a monastic community. Both young and old monks are included; the more venerable lean on T-shaped staffs for support. A recurring motif is the white string of beads with pendant cross. These prayer beads emphasize the contemplative practices that might achieve a vision of the Transfiguration light represented above.[5] The spiritual and physiological effects are detailed in a later account from Russia: "At first I was weary from continuously repeating the prayer. My tongue became numb and my jaws felt stiff . . . followed by a slight pain in the thumb of my left hand, with which I was counting the knots of the *chokti*. . . . Moreover, all this was somehow urging and compelling me to pray more and more."[6]

The icon, therefore, joins monastic ideals with the specificity of the Sinai monastery. Recently displayed in the Sinai monastery's Chapel of the Holy Fathers, the icon in that setting incorporates the community's martyrs as well.[7]

KH

NOTES

1. See Vokotopoulos 1986, pp. 64, 74 n. 66.
2. On the Spada triptych, see Panagiotes I. Vokotopoulos in London 1987, pp. 88–95, no. 74; Baltimore 1988, pp. 154–55, 224–27, no. 69. For the Yorkshire triptych, Vokotopoulos in London 1987, p. 95, no. 75. In the most recent study on Klontzas's life and work, Vereecken and Hadermann-Misguich dated the Spada and Yorkshire triptychs to the late 1570s and the early 1580s, respectively. Vereecken and Hadermann-Misguich 2000, pp. 71–84. For another such panel attributed to Klontzas, see Lazović and Rossier 1968, no. 17.
3. The *katholikon*, or main church, of the monastery is situated at the lowest level within the enclosing fortress walls; to reach the main entrance one already has to go down a short flight of stairs. Forsyth 1968, p. 8.
4. Mount Athos was a formative center for Transfiguration iconography in relation to its defense of Hesychast theology. Millet 1916, pp. 225, 227–28.
5. The prayer beads, or *komboschoini*, accompany repetition of the Jesus Prayer developed in Orthodox Hesychasm. Their modern, secular descendants can be seen in the worry beads used by Greek men today.
6. Savin 1996, p. 16. The *chokti* is a knotted rope identical in function to the prayer beads.
7. Forty monks were massacred in the fourth century at Raithou, and another forty at Sinai. See Kamil 1991, pp. 19–20.

REFERENCE

Drandakis 1990, p. 129, fig. 99.

ΤΟ ΘΕΟΒ ΑΔΙΣΤΟΝ
ΟΡΩϹ ϹΗΝΑ

43 View of Mount Sinai with Scenes of Monastic Life

Iacovos Moskos

1700–1725

Tempera and gold leaf on panel

28.7 × 39.1 × 1.9 cm (11 5/16 × 15 3/8 × 3/4 in.)

INSCRIBED

ΤΟ ΘΕΟΒΑΔΙCΤΟΝ ΟΡΩC CΗΝΑ (The God-trodden Mount Sinai); ΧΙΡ ΕΙΑΚΟΒΟΥ ΜΟCΚΟΥ (By the hand of Iacovos Moskos)

CONDITION

Uneven yellow varnish obscures original color, particularly of the pink-colored mountain. Costume details executed in thin paint over applied gold leaf. Icon painted on a single piece of wood with no frame. Large horizontal split runs length of panel; front surface filled with wax.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS ICON BY IACOVOS MOSKOS is a late example of a series of topographical icons associated with Sinai. The genre has its roots within pilgrimage maps and illustrations and was mass-produced by engraving and woodcut during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[1] The views of Mount Sinai by El Greco (fig. 126, and see cat. no. 61, reverse) reflect similar influences. Large-scale figures fill the landscape surrounding the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, so that Moskos's icon appears well populated. Below, a procession of Sinai monks welcomes the archbishop; two diminutive figures remain at the monastery entrance. Above, monks climb the famous Path of Steps to Jebel Musa, as others, including a pilgrim, descend the much steeper Jebel Katrina.

Just as active are participants from the sacred past. At the far left, Moses bends down to loosen his sandal. The Burning Bush, combined with the Virgin, is at the eastern end of the *katholikon* and marks the chapel where the relic of the Burning Bush is kept. The red shaft of sunlight directs our attention to the Virgin and illustrates a local phenomenon believed to take place once a year, in which light, passing through a gap in the mountain, strikes the site of the Burning Bush.[2] Moses appears a second time at the summit of Mount Sinai as he receives the tablets of the Law, while nearby, the prophet Elijah encounters an angel of the Lord.[3] At the top of the neighboring peak, angels lower Saint Catherine to her resting place and chapel.

The many chapels scattered across the landscape serve as architectural markers for these disparate events, depicted in the icon as if taking place simultaneously. The result collapses time and space and renders all sacred. For a visiting pilgrim, such commemorative and liturgical spaces would confirm his or her experiences at the *loca sancta* of Sinai.[4] The reverse of the panel includes an inscribed cross sketched in red paint.

KH

NOTES

1. It can also be compared with the painting of the monastery by Ioannis Kornaros placed on the back of the Archiepiscopal Throne (1778). On the topographical icons, see M. Chatzidakis 1940; Galavaris 1978a, Kühnel 1981; M. Chatzidakis 1995b. For paper icons, see Papastratos 1990.
2. This is said to occur at the vernal equinox, or March 25, the day of the Annunciation. See Papastratos 1990, p. 338 n. 6; Kühnel 1981, p. 198.
3. Mounts Sinai and Horeb become conflated in the Middle Ages, although the smaller peak beside Jebel Musa at times has been identified as Horeb. See Sivan 1990, pp. 58–59
4. On the combination of archaeological and ritual spaces, see Coleman and Elsner 1994.

REFERENCES

Galavaris 1978a, pp. 334–38, fig. 7; Kühnel 1981, pp. 163–88, 193–200, 218, fig. 7; Drandakis 1990, p. 131, fig. 100.

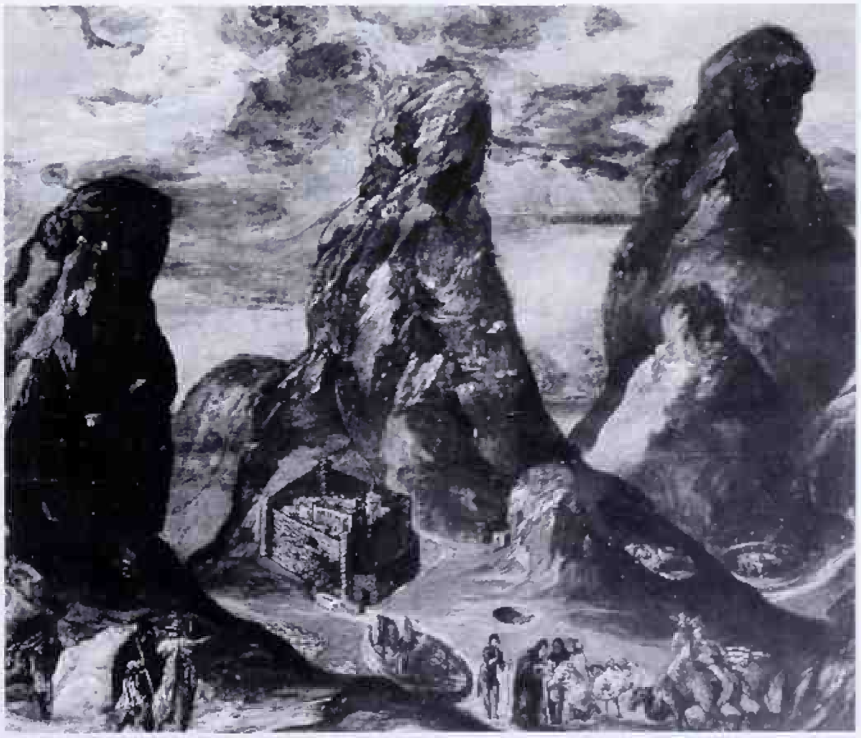


Figure 126
El Greco (Greek, 1541–1614), *View of Mount Sinai*, ca. 1570–72. Oil and tempera on panel, 41 × 47.5 cm (16 1/8 × 18 3/4 in.). Historical Museum of Crete, Iráklion.

ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ
ΧΕΡΟΥΒΙΜ

44 Saint Macarius and a Cherub

Thirteenth century

Tempera on panel

38.2 × 24.9 × 2.7 cm (15 1/16 × 9 13/16 × 1 1/16 in.)

INSCRIBED
Ο ΑΓΙΟϹ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟϹ (Saint Macarius);
ΧΕΡΟΥΒΙΜ (Cherubim)

CONDITION
Former cleaning in area of figures. Face of angel has been repainted and background shows scattered retouching. Panel has engaged frame. Reverse of panel is rough hewn, with striped design on white preparation layer.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS HIGHLY UNUSUAL ICON shows Macarius the Great (ca. 300–ca. 390), a hero of medieval monasticism, and a cherub, here a four-winged and many-eyed angel. The cherub takes Macarius by the left hand, and both gesture with their free hands to the viewer's right. The cherub is a composite of angelic types, four winged like cherubim, but many eyed like seraphim,[1] as described in the saint's vita. The meeting represented here refers on one level to the interaction between Macarius and a cherub that was recounted in the seventh- or eighth-century *Life of Saint Macarius of Scetis*.[2] The *Life* narrated several exchanges between the two figures, most notably when the cherub took hold of the holy man and led him to the site where his monastery was to be founded.[3] This spectacular endorsement of the monastery greatly added to the prestige of this famous monastic leader, and the moment depicted on the icon would naturally have had a receptive audience in the milieu of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai. To underline his monastic identity, Macarius is shown in monastic garb, in contrast to other representations of the holy man as a naked hermit or dressed in rich ecclesiastical garments, for instance.[4] Iconographically comparable is the thirteenth-century fresco at the Monastery of Saint Antony at the Red Sea, but this scene is rare.[5]

Yet the icon was more than a straightforward commemoration, as Macarius was also associated in the Middle Ages with a very popular series of homilies written about 400. One homily presented an allegorical interpretation of cherubic epiphany in which the cherub was identified with the soul illuminated by the Holy Spirit. "Covered with the beauty of ineffable glory of the Spirit [the soul] becomes all light, all face, all eye."[6] Devotional panels from a monastic context like this icon were polyvalent, able to signify various levels of meaning, and the sophisticated audience at Sinai, surely aware of Macarius's reputation as both monastic leader and theologian, would have been perfectly receptive to the icon's hagiographic and theological implications.

GP

NOTES
1. Byzantine artists were flexible when it came to depicting angels. See Peers 2001, pp. 13–60.
2. See Toda 2000.
3. The Coptic version has been translated recently. See Vivian 2004, pp. 168–70 (15–16), p. 178 (22), and p. 182 (27), for the cherub's appearances. The association of Macarius and cherubim/seraphim extended to other texts; see Evetts 1948, pp. 507–8, and Coquin 1975, pp. 115–16.
4. See C. Mango and Hawkins 1966, fig. 40, and Folda 1995, pp. 283–84, respectively.
5. Bolman 2002, pp. 49–51.
6. Dörries, Klostermann, and Kroeger 1964, pp. 2, 31–32 (1.2); Maloney 1992, p. 37.

REFERENCES
Unpublished.

45 Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus

1136–55.[1] Constantinople

Tempera and gold on parchment

Book: 33.8 × 27.6 × 15.2 cm (13⁵⁄₁₆ × 10⅞ × 6 in.)

INSCRIBED

In Greek on fol. 3r: The present book was dedicated to the monastery of the Holy Theotokos Pantanassa on the island of Saint Glykeria by the abbot of the imperial monastery of Pantocrator, the monk Joseph Hagioglykerites; on fol. 4r: On July 1st of the 7058 (1550 C.E.), I, Germanous monk and oeconomos of Crete, brought this book, that is the Theologos, to the divine and holy royal monastery of the Great Church of the Holy and God-trodden Mount Sinai; on fol. 437v: The monk Joseph, leader of the monastery of the Pantocrator-Logos, who made this book glittering with silver whiteness, dappled with gold, which Gregory the highest of the people-shepherds, being the mouthpiece of God, composed, presents it to the Monastery of the Pantanassa for the cleansing of his sins.[2]

CONDITION

Very worn leather binding, tooled in panel, stamped design over wooden boards, grooved along outer edges. Binding rebacked in 1997, with newly worked Greek endbands. Brass bosses on upper board; three bosses lost on lower board. Remnants of fore-edge straps on lower board. Beautifully prepared parchment, somewhat cockled at beginning and end of manuscript. Exquisite condition of miniatures, with very little flake loss. Evidence of interleaving curtains (no longer extant).

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. 339)

NOTES

1. C. Mango 1992 suggested 1142, with the manuscript being given for the consecration of the church at Hagia Glykeria at that time.
2. Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, p. 140.
3. This type was adapted from ancient portraits for rendering the Christian evangelists in suitably prestigious ways. See Bernabò 2000.
4. Nelson 1987, p. 75.
5. See Annemarie Weyl Carr in *ODB*, s.v. "Anastasis."

REFERENCES

Galavaris 1969, pp. 255–58; Peers 2004, pp. 59–76.

45 (opposite), Gregory Nazianzenus writing the homilies, fol. 4v

THE ILLUSTRATIONS AND HOMILETIC TEXTS are bracketed by useful and highly evocative inscriptions on folios 3r and 437v, which help situate the creation of this manuscript in an elite, monastic milieu at the capital. The manuscript was created for and has always been used in monasteries, so it is fitting that the author of the homilies, Gregory Nazianzenus (329–389), should be depicted in monastic habit. Gregory is shown on the left-hand folio (4v) as a monk in the act of writing, in an iconography known as the "author portrait."[3]

This miniature, however, not only presents one of the great Church Fathers monasticized but also offers a complex visual display. The setting for Gregory's act of composition is a golden interior space enclosed by a richly varied field of architectural elements. Gregory's head is set off by an enamel-like halo, the design for which may well derive from Islamic prototypes. Flattened and cubistically rendered, the surrounding field nonetheless evokes a monastic complex. This prismatic setting is full, to be sure, but the gravitational center is the poised writer ready to take his inspiration from the half-length figure of Christ entering the trilobate gold ground above. The illumination creates, for the monastic user of the manuscript, a connotation of ground hallowed in the monastery where similar divinely inspired work is carried out. The manuscript may also be a disguised homage from the monk Joseph (see inscription) to his mentor, Gregorius, who tonsured him at Glykeria; in this way, the church father and mentor could be honorifically combined. The manuscript provides precious insight into twelfth-century monastic patronage.[4]

Part of monastic work was the conscientious performance of the liturgy, and this manuscript was integral in that sense, for it comprises sixteen homilies read during the church calendar. The facing page on view (fol. 5r) shows another intricately woven design, but with the scene of the Anastasis (Resurrection) at its center. The Anastasis is the paradigmatic Easter image in the Orthodox Church,[5] and here it introduces Gregory's First Homily on Easter. Both pages present icons within a book, each part of a dynamic process of making clear their holy use and affect.

GP

45 (right), facing page with Anastasis, fol. 5r

Η ΑΓΙΑ
ΘΕΟΔΟCΙΑ

46 | Saint Theodosia

Early thirteenth century, Constantinople

Tempera and gold on panel

34 × 25.6 × 2.2 cm (13 3/8 × 10 1/16 × 7/8 in.)

INSCRIBED
Η ΑΓΙΑ ΘΕΟΔΟCΙΑ (Saint Theodosia)

CONDITION
Excellent condition. Very minor scattered paint losses. Contours of figures incised and saint has a double-incised halo. Some retouching to abraded gold background.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE ICON OF SAINT THEODOSIA shows her in a vivid and individualized portrayal set against a simple gold background that embraces both the ground of the icon and its frame. The black costume and headdress identify Theodosia as a nun, while the cross she carries marks her status as a martyr. The portrayal is made more vivid by strong features, subtle shadows, color modeling, and the vivid highlights that give structure and mass to both face and hands. It is an excellent example of Constantinopolitan painting from the first decades of the thirteenth century.[1]

This icon is the finest of the five icons of Theodosia to be found at Sinai.[2] Together, they testify to the popularity of this saint's cult there. Theodosia's origins lie in the period of Iconoclasm, when she emerged as a probably mythical symbol of resistance to the Iconoclastic policies of Leo III. Her cult is known from the tenth century on and was especially strong during the early fourteenth century. She was renowned as a source of healing. Notably, Constantine Akropolites composed a new version of Theodosia's life, which concluded with accounts of her miracles, including his own healing and that of his son-in-law. This healing power continued to be celebrated until the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Indeed, many citizens of Constantinople were celebrating her feast day at her shrine on May 29, 1453, when the Ottoman Turks captured the city.[3]

The quality of this image and the Constantinopolitan identity of this saint suggest that the icon might have been brought from that sacred city to Sinai, providing a trace of Constantinople's holy powers in that distant location and offering access to Theodosia's particular qualities as a healing saint. The presence of four other images of Theodosia from this period at Sinai suggests her popularity there. The scale of the panel, including the thickness of the board (2.2 cm [7/8 in.]), suggests that this icon might have been intended for the *proskynetarion*, a stand used for the display and veneration of icons on a given saint's feast day.[4]

CB

NOTES
1. Mouriki 1994, p. 213.
2. Mouriki 1994.
3. Constas 1998.
4. Mouriki 1994, p. 213.

REFERENCES
Mouriki 1990, pp. 111, 168, fig. 39, and p. 386 n. 52; Galavaris 1993–94; Mouriki 1994; Constas 1998; Anastasia Drandaki in New York 2004, p. 383, no. 238.

47 Saint John Climacus

Fifteenth century

Tempera and gold with pigmented varnish on panel

23.5 × 18.8 × 2.2 cm (9¼ × 7⁷⁄₁₆ × ⅞ in.)

INSCRIBED
Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΤΙC ΚΑΙΜΑΚΟC
(Saint John of the Ladder)

CONDITION
Very good condition. Double-lined, incised halo. Loss to varnish layer(s) has created uneven appearance to gold background. Gilding originally went to outer edge of frame (red-painted border at front covers gilding). Orange paint added to outer edge of frame. Some abrasion in hood of saint at top center. Discolored and uneven varnish.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

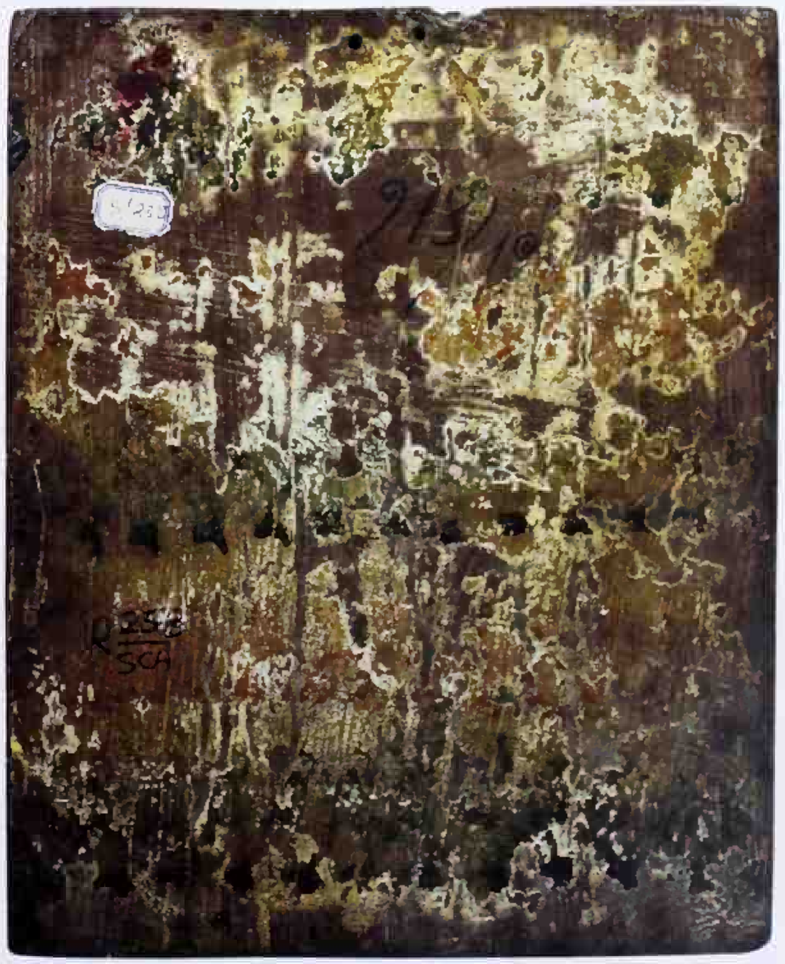
SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS (before 579–ca. 650), one of the most venerated holy figures in Byzantine monasticism, is prominently commemorated on the fourth Sunday of Lent. A hermit and monk for forty years, he later became the abbot of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai and, during his tenure, wrote the influential treatise *The Heavenly Ladder* (see cat. nos. 33, 49; see also cat. no. 48). In it he teaches monks how to attain spiritual perfection through thirty actual steps of the ladder. He is frequently depicted in the prefatory miniatures to the *Ladder*, leading the brethren to paradise, but iconic portraits of John Climacus are rare[1]—hence the significance of the Sinai panel.

In the icon, the saint wears a monastic cape, called a *kokoulion*, as well as a three-buttoned cape, or *mandyas*. He holds his text as a rolled-up scroll in one hand and blesses with the other. His gaze, directed slightly to the right, suggests that ultimate authority and salvation rest with Christ, with whom the saint is an intercessor. He is a conduit through which divine blessing is dispensed to the faithful. His monastic garb and gaunt face emphasize that salvation entails adherence to the strict rules of abstinence and dispassion codified in his treatise.[2] As the saint says in his *Heavenly Ladder*, "A monk is shaped by virtues in the way that others are shaped by pleasures. A monk has unfailing light in the eye of the heart. A monk is an abyss of humility in which every evil spirit has been plunged and smothered."[3]

BP

NOTES
1. Sinai cod. gr. 417, from the tenth century, offers an earlier example of such an image. This iconic portrait differs from the numerous images showing the saint in the act of writing. Martin 1954, fig. 1 (iconic), and figs. 14, 16, 18, 24, 25, 69, 180 (author portraits).
2. For the use of emaciated, bodiless forms in the depiction of monks and ascetics, see Maguire 1996, pp. 66–74.
3. Luibheid and Russell 1982, p. 209.

REFERENCES
G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 238, and vol. 2, p. 208; Nancy P. Ševčenko in New York 2004, pp. 383–84, no. 239.



47, reverse

48 | The Heavenly Ladder of Saint John Climacus

Late twelfth century

Tempera and gold on panel

41.3 × 29.9 × 2.1 cm (16¼ × 11¾ × 13/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Ο(ἅγιος) ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΤΗC ΚΛΙΜΑΚΟC (Holy John of the Ladder); Ο[ἅγιος] ΑΝΤΟΝΙΟC ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟC (Holy Antonios Archbishop); on reverse: Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C ΝΙΚΑ (Jesus Christ conquers)

CONDITION

Figures painted over gold ground except for figures at lower right placed directly over preparation layer. Incised halos and wing for angels. Warm-colored, pigmented varnish used to create detail on God's robe, Antonios's costume, and angel's wing. Minor loss to paint films. Strip of wood added to top of panel.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS'S WIDELY PUBLISHED TREATISE, *The Heavenly Ladder*,[1] describes the process of achieving spiritual salvation in thirty steps (see also cat. nos. 33, 47, 49). The present image from the Sinai monastery offers the earliest extant icon illustrating this text and also depicting its author. It borrows its composition from prefatory miniatures in eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts of the *Ladder*,[2] visually defining the path to heaven as a ladder with thirty rungs.

The dynamic diagonal of the ladder separates the field into two spheres: heaven and earth. As the monks begin their ascent, their faces and their hands, raised in prayer, are directed toward their salvific goal: Christ. John Climacus at the top of the ladder serves as the model of attaining perfection. His victory against temptations is also reinforced by the image of the triumphant cross on the back of the icon.[3] However, the path is perilous and success is not ensured; the monks' ascent is stalked with temptations and sins depicted as devils with their bows drawn, ready to loose arrows. A few of the brethren fall prey to these snarls; they are dragged by devils using black chains and thrown into the mouth

48, reverse

NOTES

1. Also called *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* and *Ladder of Paradise*.
2. Martin 1954, figs. 12–13, 15, 17, 31, 66–67, 133, 179.
3. Similarly, a number of chapters in the *Heavenly Ladder* finish with the image of the victory crown: step nos. 8, 13, 14, 15, 26 in Luibheid and Russell 1982, pp. 151, 164, 170, 186, 251.
4. Luibheid and Russell 1982, pp. 78, 91, 104, 108–10, 118, 159, 174, 184–85, 194–95, 209, 243–44, 248, 271–72.
5. Luibheid and Russell 1982, pp. 74, 96–98, 111, 181, 195, 235.
6. On textiles and liturgical vestments, see Woodfin 2004, pp. 295–98 (with recent bibliog.).
7. Mouriki 1990, pp. 107–8.
8. For the role of the Holy Cross in imperial ideology, see the discussion on the Limburg *Staurothek* (container of relics of the Holy Cross), Klein 2004, pp. 105–12.

REFERENCES

Martin 1954; Mouriki 1990, pp. 107, 155, fig. 24; Belting 1994, pp. 272–73; Corrigan 1996; Kathleen Corrigan in New York 1997a, pp. 376–77, no. 247.

of Hades. This visualization of the monks' bitter battles against temptation is a frequent metaphor in the *Ladder*.[4]

To counteract this danger, a second group of brethren has assembled at the lower right; they raise their hands in supplication to the angelic host at the upper left. This second diagonal of the composition reveals how penance and prayers literally and physically pass through the field of battle, lending support to the virtuous and penitent. A particular concept of salvation emerges: a cenobitic life based on prayer, penance, and virtue as a means to salvation. The angelic host above mirrors the righteous monks below, just as the virtuous brethren are often compared to obedient angelic beings in the *Heavenly Ladder*.[5]

The figures next to Christ at the top of the ladder are identified by name: Saint John Climacus and Holy Antonios, the archbishop. The latter's prominent place and costume separate him from the monastic community; he wears sparkling *epimanikia* (cuffs) and *epitrachelion* (sash) of interwoven gold and silk.[6] His high social status matches the lavish decoration on the back of this icon. It features a cross of victory, outlined with a string of pearls and set inside the central medallion of a series of interlocking roundels. This geometric pattern is reminiscent of luxury silks and also appears on the contemporary Sinai icon of the Annunciation (cat. no. 13) and on two tetraptychs.[7] The inscription on the *Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus*, "Jesus Christ conquers," further links this image with the sphere of the elite.[8] The associations with luxury silks and imperial symbols on the back of the icon and the glittering golden clothes and prominent position of the archbishop Antonios on the front suggest that he was either the donor or the recipient of this icon. While offering a quintessential image of ascent to spiritual perfection, this devotional icon paradoxically also displays a taste for luxury.

BP

48 (opposite), detail with Christ

48 (below), detail with devils

صورة سلم الفضايل والرهبان الصاعدين في درجات العمل وقتال الشياطين لهم وهبوط المتوانيين الى الجحيم

49 | *The Heavenly Ladder* (in Arabic)

Saint John Climacus (before 579–ca. 650)

1612, Sinai (?)

Tempera and gold on paper

Book: 30.5 × 22 × 4.8 cm (12 × 8⅝ × 1⅞ in.)

INSCRIBED

Main inscription on fol. 13r:

صورةُ سلّم الفضائل و الرهبان الصاعدين في درجات العمل
و قتال الشياطين لهم و هبوط المتوانين إلى الجحيم

(Image of the ladder of virtues, of the monks ascending on the rungs of [good] works, of the devils' battle against them, and of the fall of the flagging to hell); top-right caption: صورةُ جسد كاترينا (Image of the body of Catherine); center-right caption: صورةُ العفيفة (Image of the chaste one); bottom-right caption: صورةُ موسى (Image of Moses); bottom-left caption: يوحنّا (John)[1]

SCRIBAL COLOPHON

"This book was finished at the hand of the poorest of the servants of God the High, Thabit, the Christian priest from Hama, and that took place about the beginning of the month of Tishrin I [October], in the year seven thousand and hundred and twenty, corresponding to the month of Ramadan of the [Muslim] year 1020."[2]

CONDITION

Undecorated, very worn leather binding over pasteboard covers (warped). Greek-style binding has worked chevron endbands. Paper spine labels chipped. Textblock consists of Arabic paper, burnished. First quire is water damaged through lower two-thirds of the folio. Scattered edge tears and staining throughout. Black text ink in good condition. Considerable abrasion and flake losses in illuminations and gilded backgrounds.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. Arab 343)

NOTES

1. The Arabic texts have kindly been transcribed and translated by Dr. Simon O'Meara and Professor Dimitri Gutas.
2. Weitzmann 1973, p. 31 n. 114
3. Weitzmann 1973, fig. 45.
4. E.g., Atasoy and Çağman 1974, pl. 43.
5. Weitzmann 1973, p. 32.
6. And 1998, pp. 245–48. I thank Dr. Persis Berlekamp for the loan of this book and for generous guidance.
7. And 1998, pp. 35, 154.
8. And 1998, p. 141; Milstein 1990, pp. 12–13.
9. Atil 1984; Milstein 1990, pp. 12–13

REFERENCES
Atiya 1955, p. 9; Weitzmann 1973, pp. 31–32.

49 (opposite). *The Heavenly Ladder*, fol. 13r

THIS SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPT translates the words and the images of Saint John Climacus's *The Heavenly Ladder* for Arabic-speaking monks, most likely at Saint Catherine's monastery at Sinai. This manuscript has two illuminations (opposite and below). The initial author portrait follows medieval Greek conventions (see below).[3] John Climacus, though dressed in Muslim style, begins to write his text on the left page, as is proper for Greek, rather than from the right, as in Arabic. He is seated on a bench before a desk, unlike representations of Muslim scribes, who sit on the floor.[4]

The colorful full-page miniature of the Heavenly Ladder, shown here, similarly adapts Byzantine models. As in the late-twelfth-century icon reproduced earlier (see cat. no. 48), the monks on the ladder are tormented, and some are being dragged to the mouth of hell below. At the summit, Jesus leads John Climacus to heaven, represented not as a quadrant of a circle but as a paradisiacal landscape, visually defined as the Sinai. A diminutive Moses at the right kneels before the tear-shaped flames of the Burning Bush with the Virgin and Child inside, as angels above kneel before the body of Saint Catherine wrapped in a red garment (e.g., see cat. no. 43). In the lower left corner, John Climacus appears with monks before the monastery of Saint Catherine with its mosque minaret[5] and grapples with a devil forcing a monk into hell. These references indicate that the scene of spiritual contest is no longer taking place in a generalized sacred landscape but at Sinai itself.

The Ottoman illuminator introduced many features to suit contemporary audiences. Monks mount the ladder from the lower right—not left, as in the earlier icon—and thus follow the direction of the Arabic script. Pastel devils of Ottoman illumination with spots replace the black demons of Byzantium,[6] and the small human-headed figure of hell gives way to a Chinese-inspired dragon of Islamic illumination.[7] Jesus has an Islamic flame halo, and the Virgin and Child are nestled in flames like Ottoman depictions of Abraham in the fire.[8] Probably executed at Saint Catherine's, based on the visual references to Sinai, the illumination is a provincial variant of Persian-derived illumination in the larger region.[9]

RSN

49, John Climacus writing, fol. 13v

50 Double-Sided Icon with Saints Sergius and Bacchus, and with the Virgin

1260s–70s, County of Tripoli, or Sinai

Obverse: Tempera and metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel; reverse: tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

95.3 × 62.9 × 4 cm ($37\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{9}{16}$ in.)

INSCRIBED

Obverse: MH(τη)P Θ(εο)Y (Mother of God); I(ησοῦ)C X(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); reverse: O A(γιος) CEPΓIOC (Saint Sergius); O A(γιος) BAKXOC (Saint Bacchus)

CONDITION

Obverse: The equestrian saints are in good condition despite losses on the borders and a large, vertical crack at the middle. Reverse: Extensive loss to the painted surface. Scattered retouching to painted surface and regilding. Two wooden strips are attached to the bottom edge of panel. Tongue-and-groove joinery with I-shaped void at center suggests additional mount could have been used for object.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

OF THE THIRTEENTH-CENTURY ICONS at the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, a large number depict soldier saints, including equestrian saints, for in the era of the Crusades, there was a surge in the devotion to saints such as George, Demetrius, and Theodore.[1] Saints Sergius and Bacchus, often depicted together, had been venerated since the early Byzantine period, especially among the Christians of Syria, as they'd been Roman soldiers martyred at Rusafah in the early fourth century.[2] This brilliant, two-sided icon has frequently been identified as the product of a Veneto-Crusader atelier at Acre, recently called the Workshop of the Soldier Saints.[3] But new research points to a different identification, supporting other proposals that stress Syrian and Cypriot characteristics.[4] Stylistic comparisons with frescoes at Syrian and Lebanese sites—including frescoes of equestrian saints—argue that, like the frescoes, the Sinai icon was by a Syrian painter, perhaps working for Syrian Orthodox or Melchite

50, reverse

Figure 127 (above left)
Virgin Hodegetria, ca. 1260. Tempera and metal leaf on panel, 111 × 80 cm (43¾ × 31½ in.). Theotokos Monastery, Kaftoun, Archdiocese of Mount Lebanon

Figure 128 (above right)
Baptism, thirteenth century (reverse of fig. 127). Tempera and metal leaf on panel.

Figure 129 (right)
Fresco with Saint Bacchus, 1208. Deir Mar Musa al-Habashi, Syria.

NOTES

1. Folda 2005, pp. 329–30.
2. Walter 2003, 146–62; Fowden 1999, pp. 7–17, 175–91.
3. Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, pp. 374–75, no. 230; Folda 2005, pp. 338–42, 532–33, 559.
4. Mouriki 1985–86, pp. 68–70, figs. 62–65; Mouriki 1990, p. 119.
5. Immerzeel 2004.
6. Immerzeel 2003.
7. Helou 2003.
8. Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 239–41, no. 857, and pp. 252–54; Hunt 1991; Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, p. 374, no. 229; Folda 2005, p. 559.
9. Elka Bakalova in New York 2004, p. 353.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 185–86, and vol. 2, pp. 170–71; Weitzmann 1984a, pp. 143–84, figs. 3, 4; Mouriki 1985–86, pp. 68–70, figs. 63–64; Mouriki 1990, pp. 119, 192, fig. 66, Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 252–54, no. 563; Dodd 2001, pp. 114–17; Gerstel 2001, pp. 263–85, fig. 5; Nada Helou 2003, pp. 101–31, figs. 6, 7; Immerzeel 2003, pp. 265–86, pl. 6; Evans 2004, p. 75; Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, pp. 374–75, no. 230; Immerzeel 2004, pp. 29–60, figs. 3–4; Folda 2005, pp. 17–18, 338–42, 532–33, 559, figs. 197, 198.

Figure 130
Virgin Blachernitissa, 1260/70. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 99.2 × 67 cm (39¹⁄₁₆ × 26⅜ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Byzantine Orthodox) churches in the County of Tripoli (fig. 129).[5] Also striking is the similarity between the Virgin of this Sinai icon and the Virgin on a two-sided icon at Kaftoun, Lebanon, dated to around 1260 (fig. 127).[6] The situation is complex, for the Baptism of Christ on the verso of the Kaftoun icon shares stylistic and iconographic motifs with other icons at Sinai (fig. 128).[7] In addition, two images at Sinai—a large Virgin and Child Blachernitissa (fig. 130) and a small panel of Saint Sergius with a female donor—seem to have been produced in the same atelier as the present two-sided Sergius and Bacchus.[8] Moreover, the Virgin Blachernitissa has embossed circles in its gold ground like others found in earlier Sinai images that suggest it was made in close proximity to Saint Catherine's.[9] Thus, it is possible that painters working in the province of Tripoli also worked at Sinai. In contrast, the small image of Saint Sergius seems more likely to have been commissioned for personal use by the donor and offered as a gift on pilgrimage. In the same way, the large two-sided icon might originally have been intended for a Syrian Orthodox or a Melchite church, even as a processional icon, and subsequently presented to Saint Catherine's monastery by an individual or community.

RWC

51 | Moses Removing His Sandals before the Burning Bush

Early thirteenth century, Sinai

Tempera and metal leaf over textile on panel

100.5 × 65.7 × 3.1 cm (36⁹⁄₁₆ × 25⁷⁄₈ × 1³⁄₁₆ in.)

INSCRIBED

[E]KAΛECEN AYTON [κύριος ἐκ τ]OY BATOY [λέ]ΓON MωHCH MώHCH [ὁ δ]E EIΠEN TI E[στιν; ὁ δὲ εἶπ]EN MH . . . (The Lord called him out of the bush, saying, Moses, Moses; and he said, What is it? And he said . . . [EXOD. 3:4–5])

CONDITION

Severe abrasion to entire surface, revealing textile support. Figure of Moses has a double-lined incised halo. Loss of inscription in upper right. Donor figure thinly painted over gold. Engaged frame with additional strips added to top and bottom.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOD'S REVELATION to Moses, as told in the Hebrew Bible, for the location of the Sinai monastery and for the life of its monastic community is revealed in the large number of works devoted to the theme of Moses before the Burning Bush. The association of the Burning Bush with the Virgin Mary, to whom the monastery was initially dedicated, provided further impetus for the representation of this theme.[1] Images of Moses before the Burning Bush are found in the earliest decoration of the church—in its great sanctuary mosaic and in a humble bronze cross (cat. no. 35).

The thirteenth-century panel depicting Moses removing his sandals—paired with another representing Moses receiving the tablets of the Law—is the most faithful late copy of the sixth-century mosaic. Scholars have ascribed the two icons to the hand of a Constantinopolitan painter who, in light of the fidelity of the copy, must have worked at Sinai. Of interest is the representation of a kneeling male figure at the left edge of the lower frame. Wearing a turban, this figure has been identified as a Melchite Arab, a member of the Orthodox Christian population that lived in the region. In all likelihood, the diminutive figure was the donor of the panel and its companion piece.[2]

Icons of Moses found at the monastery are of varying size and shape and served a number of purposes, from private devotional works to the adornment of bema doors (cat. no. 22). While lay visitors to the monastery would have envisioned the biblical theophany through its representation, the image of Moses before the Burning Bush would have held special meaning for the religious community. Within a century of this icon's creation, the scene was commonly represented in Orthodox monastic churches, particularly in subsidiary spaces.[3] Mentions in textual sources suggest that representations of Moses before the Burning Bush may have been even more widespread than suggested by the preserved visual evidence.[4] The proliferation of images of Moses before the Burning Bush in the late Byzantine period may have reflected changes in monastic spirituality—changes that would have been felt at Sinai, as well. Due to his extreme asceticism, Moses is viewed in Byzantine texts of the late period as a monastic exemplar. The religious community at Sinai could not have failed to recall him wandering through the desert, a rough topography that they held in common. So, too, Moses' reception of God's voice through the medium of the Burning Bush was a story that would have resonated with monks, who sought to encounter the divine light through sustained prayer, in imitation of the Old Testament prophet.[5]

SFJG

Figure 131
Moses Receiving the Law, early thirteenth century. Tempera on panel, 87.6 × 65.1 cm (34½ × 25⅝ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

NOTES

1. See Kristen M. Collins, "Visual Piety and Institutional Identity at Sinai," herein.
2. See Garidis 1993–94; Mouriki 1991–92, p. 184.
3. Among others, the Church of the Savior in Chora (Constantinople); Saint Nicholas Orphanos (Thessaloniki); and the Church of the Archangel Michael (Lesnovo, Macedonia). See also Roussanova 2005.
4. For example, the late Byzantine court poet Manuel Philes composed two short poems on Moses before the Burning Bush and Moses receiving the Law. In all likelihood, these poems were inspired by paintings of these subjects; Miller 1967, vol. 1, p. 266.
5. According to Theoleptos of Philadelphia, writing in the early fourteenth century, a monk "following the example of Moses, ascends the mountain of divine knowledge, is deemed worthy of the divine theophany, hears the divine voice and receives the law of the Spirit"; Sinkewicz 1992, pp. 112–15.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 160, and vol. 2, pp. 140–41; Weitzmann 1978, pp. 36, 75, pl. 18; Mouriki 1990, pp. 110–11, 166, fig. 36; Mouriki 1991–92, Garidis 1993–94; Nancy P. Ševčenko in New York 1997a, pp. 379–80, no. 250.

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459

52 | Moses with the Virgin and Child

Thirteenth century

Tempera and gold on panel

23.2 × 19.1 × 1.9 cm (9⅛ × 7½ × ¾ in.)

INSCRIBED

Obverse: Ο ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗC ΜΩΥCΙC (Prophet Moses); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); reverse: Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστὸ)C ΝΙΚΑ (Jesus Christ conquers)

CONDITION

Decorative border repainted over black-colored paint layer. Several areas around the figures' feet have been repaired with infills. Exterior profile of top and bottom engaged frame slightly raised.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS ICON OF MOSES gesturing to a standing Virgin and Child belongs to a series of ten Sinai icons in which a saint or patriarch accompanies the Virgin Kyriotissa, an iconographic type in which the Virgin holds the child in front of her with both hands (fig. 132).[1] The version seen here is explicitly identified as the Virgin of the Burning Bush on a thirteenth-century Sinai icon with Sinaitic saints (fig. 82), painted by the artist of another icon herein (see cat. no. 53), and may refer to a now-lost icon in the Chapel of the Burning Bush.[2] The same Virgin and Child reappear surrounded by branches and joined by Saint Catherine on a thirteenth-century icon (cat. no. 56), and a seated variant is found on other small icons at the monastery.[3]

Weitzmann has suggested that the icons in this series were commissioned with the name saints of patrons as votive gifts or souvenirs,[4] while Mouriki thought they were made to be given to prestigious pilgrims.[5] Yet if they were gifts or souvenirs, why have none been found elsewhere, and why would the monastery have preserved these images for centuries? Instead, a local painter may have painted them as personal devotional icons for monks in the monastery—hence the repetition of the common names of George and Sabas. Eleventh-century sources document that monks had icons in their cells "for worship."[6] The venerating saint would have provided a model of devotion for the patron at the monastery, and the icons would have retained their significance for subsequent monks at Sinai.

KC, RSN

NOTES

1. See Mouriki 1988, pp. 337–38, for Kyriotissa iconography at Sinai; Weitzmann 1974, p. 39. The other figures represented are Abraham, Isaiah, Joachim, and Symeon; and Saints Theodore, George (twice), and Sabas (twice). One of the Sabas icons was taken to Kiev in the nineteenth century and was subsequently lost in World War II, for which see Etingof 2005, pp. 661–62.
2. Mouriki 1988, p. 338; Mouriki 1990, p. 113.
3. Weitzmann 1975, pp. 56–57, figs. 23–24.
4. Weitzmann 1974, p. 39.
5. Mouriki 1990, p. 109.
6. J. Thomas and Hero 2000, vol. 1, pp. 156, 176.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1974, p. 53; O. E. Etingof 2005, pp. 661–62.

52, reverse

Figure 132
Isaiah and the Virgin, thirteenth century. Tempera on panel. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

53 Virgin with Moses and Patriarch Euthymios II of Jerusalem

The Painter Peter

ca. 1223, Palestine or Sinai

Tempera and metal leaf on textile over panel

45.4 × 37.5 × 1.9 cm (17⅞ × 14¾ × ¾ in.)

INSCRIBED

In badly misspelled Greek: Ο ΠΡ(ο)ΦΗΤΗC ΜΟΥCΙC (The prophet Moses); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); ΕΛΕΟ Θ(ε)Ω ΕΥΘΥΜΗΟC ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗC ΗΕΡΟCΟΛΗΜΟΝ Ο ΜΑΚΑΡΗΟC (The blessed Euthymios, by the mercy of God patriarch of Jerusalem); Μακαρίζομέν σε πάσε έ γενατέ, Θ(εοτό)κε παρθένε· ἐν σὶ γὰρ ὁ ἀχόριτος Χ(ριστὸ)ς ὁ Θ(εὸ)ς ἡμ(ῶν) χορεθῆνε εὐδόκισεν. Μακάριή ἐσμεν κὲ ἡμ(εῖς)· προστ[α]σήαν σε ἔχομ(εν). Ἡμέ(ρας) γὰρ κ(αὶ) νηκτ(ὸς) πρεσβέβις ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, κὲ τὰ σκήπτρα τῖς βασιλήας τὲς σὲς εἰκεσίες κρατίνοντε. Διὸ ἀνημνοῦντες βοῶμεν· Χέρε κεχαριτομέ(νη), ὁ Κ(ύριο)ς μετὰ σοῦ (All we the generations call thee blessed, O Virgin Theotokos, for in thee He, the Uncontainable One, Christ our God, was pleased to be contained. Blessed are we also [who] have thee as protection, for day and night dost thou intercede for us, and the scepters of the kingdom are strengthened by thine entreaties. Wherefore, with hymns we cry to thee: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee);[1] Εὐ(φ)ρένου, ἔρημος ἡ οὐ τήκτουσα, εὐθύμησον, ἡ οὐκ ὠδείνουσα, ὅτι ἐπλήθηνεν τέκνα ἀνὴρ ἐπηθειμήων τὸν τοῦ [Πν(εύματο)ς] (Be glad, O barren one that has not given birth, be of good cheer, thou that hast not travailed; for a man of desires has multiplied [thy] children of the Spirit);[2] ΔΕ(ησις) ΠΕΤΡΟΥ ΖΩΓΡΑΦΟΥ (Prayer of Peter the painter)

CONDITION

Good condition. Chrysography and gilded halo for figure of Christ and costume details. Remnants of gilding in foreground and possibly Virgin's halo. Abrasion and losses throughout black background and engaged frame. Red text has been applied over losses to black ground, suggesting later application. Thick, uneven varnish layer.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

UNLIKE OTHER ICONS with diminutive donor portraits (e.g., cat. nos. 10, 11, 42), this one depicts Euthymios II of Jerusalem on the same scale as the adjacent holy figures, the Virgin and Moses.[3] Tonsured as was customary for Eastern Orthodox monks at the time, Euthymios wears a cross-patterned chasuble, or *polystavrion*, that signifies his patriarchal rank. He has no halo, and the word "blessed" before his name means he was already dead when the icon was painted. The patriarch's marble tombstone still stands in the northeast corner of the Sinai basilica and bears a Greek and Arabic epitaph dated Wednesday, December 13, 1223 (fig. 133).[4] The present icon must have been painted around that time and probably hung next to the tomb.[5]

The image of Moses holding the tablets of the Law (from EXOD. 31:18) refers to Sinai as Euthymios's place of burial. One of the short liturgical songs, or troparia, written on the frame honors Saint Euthymios the Great (d. 473), the deceased patriarch's patron saint. The second, a hymn to the Virgin, forms part

53, reverse

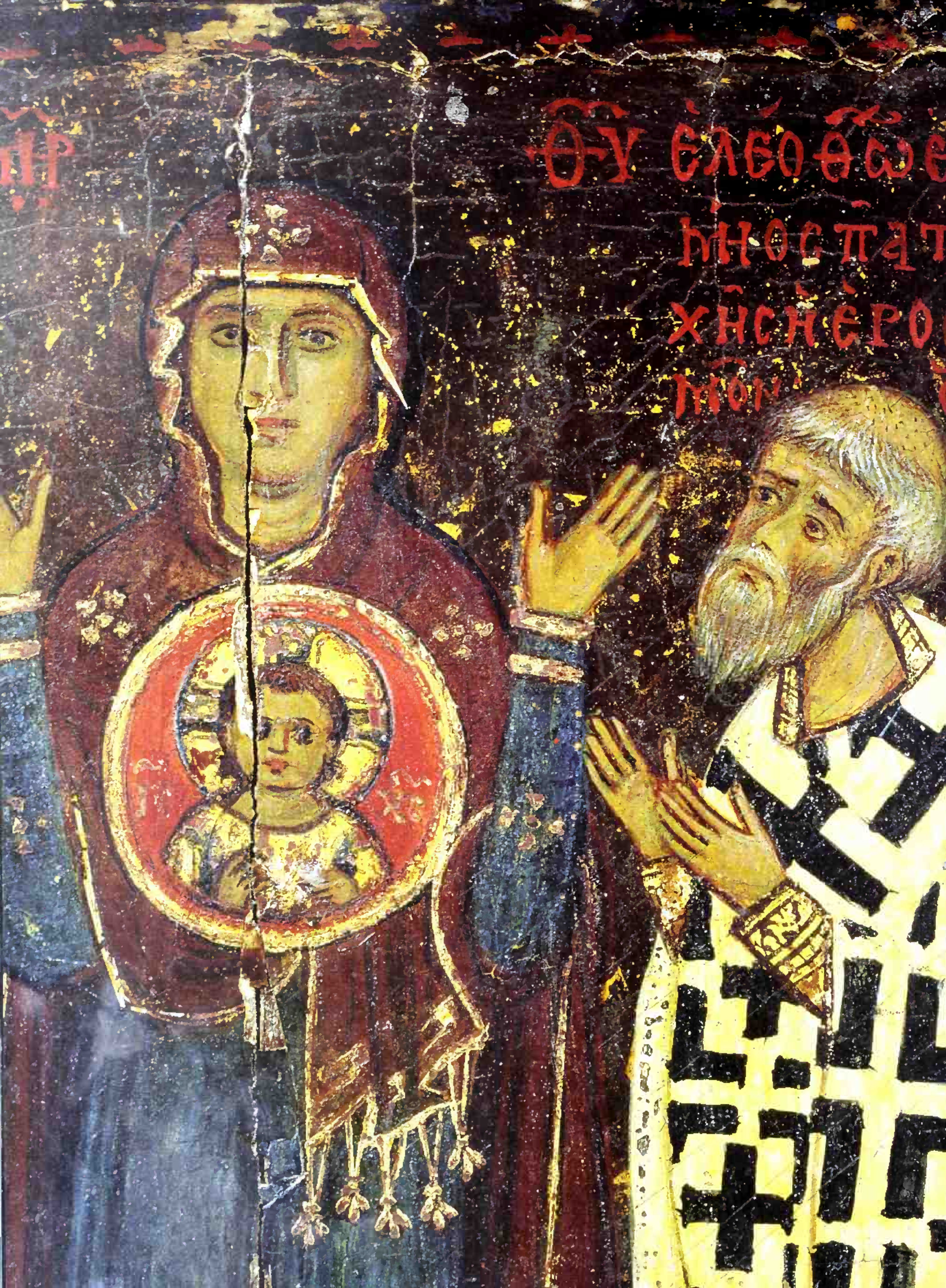


Figure 133
Tombstone of Euthymios, 1223. Inscription on marble. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Robert S. Nelson.

of the daily commemoration of the dead during the midnight church office of nocturns, or *mesonyktikon*,[6] where it precedes the prayer "Remember, O Lord, our fathers and brethren that have fallen asleep in hope of the resurrection of eternal life, and all that have ended their days in piety and faith."[7]

Datable with relative precision, the present work provides a reference point for the chronology of other Sinai icons. The image of Saint John Climacus (see cat. no. 47) is so close to it in manner of execution that it can be ascribed to the same painter. The artist signed his name here, which is unusual, in a short prayer below the edge of the Virgin's mantle. Similar inscriptions by him are found on three more Sinai panels.[8]

GRP

NOTES

1. *Great Horologion* 1997, p. 37; compare *Festal Menaion* 1977, p. 516.
2. *Great Horologion* 1997, p. 393.
3. On Euthymios II, see Pahlitzsch 2001, p. 258.
4. Tafrali 1913, pp. 78–80, no. 2; Rabino 1938, pp. 27, 103, nos. 33–34, 114; on the date, compare Grumel 1962, pp. 197–98.
5. On funerary portraits in Byzantine painting, see Papamastorakis 1996; Weissbrod 2003, pp. 79–171 (with bibliog.).
6. On the significance of this part of nocturns, see Simmons 1984, p. 26.
7. *Great Horologion* 1997, pp. 37–38.
8. Mouriki 1988.

REFERENCES

Amantos 1928, p. 47; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 158, and vol. 2, pp. 138–39; Alipranitis 1986, pp. 93–104, fig. 51; Mouriki 1988, pp. 329–31, 335–37, figs. 1–4, 16, 18; Mouriki 1990, pp. 112–13, 175, fig. 48, and p. 386 n. 60 (with bibliog.); Mouriki 1995, p. 122, no. 12; Lidov 1999, pp. 98–99, no. 29; Baltoyanni 2000, pp. 139–41

53 (opposite), detail

639

54 Saints Nicholas, Sabas, Barbara, and Irene

Twelfth century, Sinai(?)

Tempera and gold on panel

49.7 × 37.5 × 2.5 cm ($19\frac{9}{16} \times 14\frac{3}{4} \times 1$ in.)

INSCRIBED
Ο Α(γιος) ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟC (Saint Nicholas); Ο Α(γιος) CΑΒΑC (Saint Sabas); Η ΑΓΙΑ ΒΑΡ-ΒΑΡΑ (Saint Barbara); Η ΑΓΙΑ ΗΡΙΝΗ (Saint Irene)

CONDITION
Entire background originally gilded, as seen in areas of loss around Saint Barbara's feet. Pink marbleized background in lower half of composition later addition. In lower register, large losses to each of the figures have been retouched.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

NOTES
1. See Yuri Piatnitsky in New York 1997a, pp. 122–23, no. 69.
2. Treadgold 1982, p. 237.
3. New York 1997a, pp. 60–62.
4. Kühnel 2001, pp. 353–62.
5. Dodd 2001, pp. 62–63.
6. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 184.
7. Weitzmann 1966b, fig. 12a, b.

REFERENCES
Unpublished.

THIS ICON OF FOUR SAINTS is deceptively simple. Two male saints, Nicholas and Sabas, at the left, balance two female saints, Barbara and Irene, at the right. The men make a gesture of speech or blessing and hold a book or scroll. Each woman grasps a martyr's cross in her right hand and makes a gesture of acknowledgment with her left. The men are accorded the more dominant gestures with the superior hand, and the women the more distinctive garments—Barbara's bright red tunic and Irene's gilded imperial *loros* and *thorakion*.

The four saints in a row recall menologia icons (see cat. no. 31), but the reason for their selection is less clear. Only three of these saints' feast days are contiguous (Barbara, Dec. 4; Sabas, Dec. 5; and Nicholas, Dec. 6); Irene's falls much later in the liturgical year (Aug. 9). Normally, when several saints appear on the same icon, they are of a common type, for example, military saints.[1]

The placement and cult of each of these four saints do, however, provide clues to their inclusion. The two outer saints are more universal, the inner saints more local. In Byzantine art, center trumps side, and stage left supercedes stage right. Thus, compositionally, the male half and Sabas rank higher than the female half and Barbara. At the sides are Nicholas, one of the most popular saints in the Byzantine Empire, and Irene, less common but an empress and supporter of icons during the Iconoclastic period.[2] Sabas and Barbara were important regionally. Sabas founded a major monastery in Palestine and served as a model for monks. His portrait appears at the center of other monastic saints on the back of an eleventh-century processional cross.[3] The Crusaders embraced Sabas's cult and portrayed him prominently in the redecorated church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.[4]

The cult of Saint Barbara is also associated with Syria and Palestine.[5] She joins Symeon Stylites, another saint from that region, on a thirteenth-century icon at Sinai.[6] Finally, Irene may have been important to Sinai. Dressed similarly to Catherine (cat. no. 55), she was paired with the monastery's new patron on the frame of a thirteenth-century icon of the Crucifixion (cat. no. 15).[7] In sum, Nicholas and Irene contribute their renown and status to the celebration of Sabas and Barbara.

RSN

54, reverse

Η ΑΓΙΑ
ΕΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ

55 | Saint Catherine and Scenes from Her Life

Early thirteenth century, Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf on panel

75.3 × 51.4 × 2.5 cm (29⅝ × 20¼ × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

On center panel: left: H ΑΓΙΑ (Saint), right. ΕΚΑΤΕΡΗΝΑ (Catherine); at top: η α(γία) προσευχομενη (The saint in prayer); η α(γία) . . . (The saint [illegible]); at right: η α(γία) διαλεγόμενη (The saint interrogated); προσπεσών(τες) ή ρήτορες η(ς) τούς πόδας τ(ῆ)ς άγ(ίας) (The rhetors falling at the feet of the saint); η ρητορες εν τη καμ(ιν)ω (The rhetors in the furnace); at left: η αγ(ία) τύπτετε (The saint is struck); πρόσπεσων η δέσποινα τὴν α(γίαν) εν τη φυλακει (The empress falling before the saint in the prison); η α(γία) δηαλεγομένη μετὰ τοῦ ἐπαρ(χου) καὶ τοῦ βασιλεος (The saint interrogated by the eparch and the emperor); at bottom: η α(γία) εν το τροχω (The saint on the wheel) ; [ἡ] α(γία) και η δε[σποι]να δηαλεγόμενα[ι . . . β]ασιλ(έως) (The saint and the empress interrogated [by the] emperor); η αγ(ίες) ξυφη τελη̣ροῦνται (The saints are put to death by the sword)[1]

CONDITION

Scattered flake losses in gilded and painted surfaces. Majority of losses are along the vertical cracks through panel. Halos are painted. Very uneven, amber-colored varnish. Panel is warped in two parts, creating a washboard effect. Evidence of several structural restoration treatments on reverse of panel.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

SAINT CATHERINE IS AN UNUSUAL SUBJECT for Byzantine art. Scholars believe that this panel is the only extended cycle of her life to survive in any medium in Byzantium.[2] It is an interesting example of the possible artistic and social exchanges between the Byzantine East and the Latin West; indeed, Catherine's material and spiritual ties to the monastery named after her (the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai) probably developed as a response to the needs of Latin pilgrims, who traveled to Sinai with hopes of venerating her relics there. Although the sixth-century Justinianic foundation was dedicated to the Virgin, by the early thirteenth century, it was referred to as the Monastery of Saint Catherine by Latin pilgrims. The Greeks did not adopt this name until at least a century later.[3]

This icon displays a regal Catherine in the center of the panel. Her elaborate garb and high crown have been linked to Byzantine female imperial imagery.[4] Alternatively, she has also been said to resemble depictions of the Georgian queen Tamar.[5] That the figure of Catherine can plausibly allude to multiple cultural sources is symptomatic of the icon type, this particular icon, and the nature of the saint herself. The narrative icon format is believed to have accommodated a multicultural audience composed of Greeks, Latins, Georgians, even Muslims, and Catherine was a saint venerated by such diverse groups.[6] Interestingly, the icon eschews all reference to Catherine's relics that constituted an integral part of the monastery's popularity with pilgrims; also, unlike Italian examples, it does not especially concentrate on Catherine's learning and rhetorical skills.[7] Instead, the depiction of the saint's life elaborates on the varied tortures she underwent and her final death by sword. This might have been because, in the eleventh century, a major portion of her relics at Sinai were removed to France, thus initiating yet another phase in the afterlife of this saint.[8]

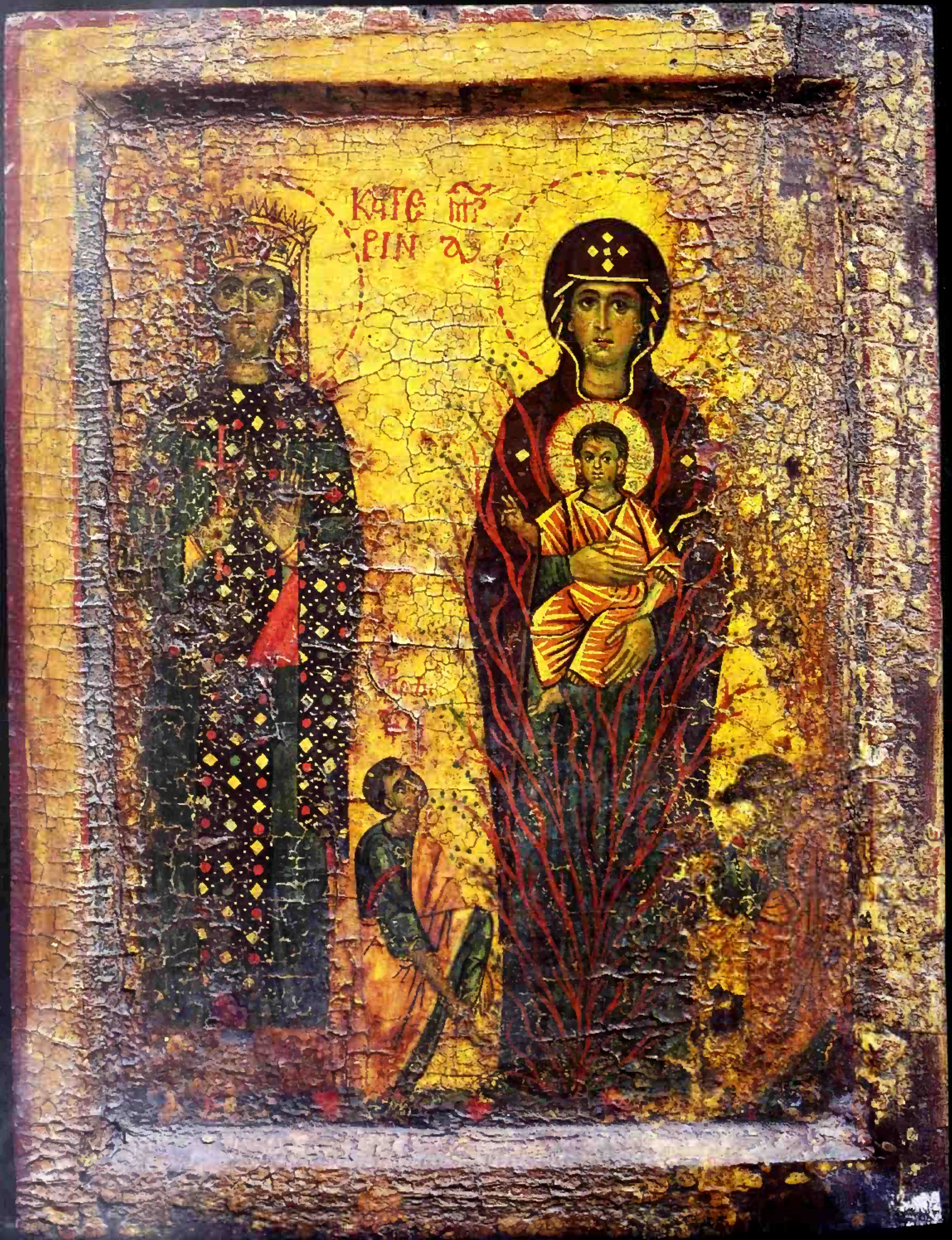
RC

NOTES

1. After Nancy P. Ševčenko in New York 2004, pp. 341.
2. Baltoyanni 1982–83.
3. A typikon for the monastery from the year 1214, written by Archbishop Symeon, is included in the manuscript Sinai gr. 1097; in this text, the monastery is still dedicated to the Virgin and not to Saint Catherine. See N. P. Ševčenko 1999, p. 163. See also her catalogue entry on the same icon in New York 2004, pp. 341–43, no. 201.
4. Mouriki 1990, pp. 114–15. See also G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 147–49.
5. Nancy P. Ševčenko in New York 2004, pp. 342–43.
6. For the multiculturalism of Byzantine narrative icons, see N. P. Ševčenko 1999. Ludolph of Suchem, who visited Sinai in the fourteenth century, recounts how the Saracens joined the Latins in kneeling before the relics of Saint Catherine: Stewart 1895, p. 86. See also the account of Felix Fabri: Hassler 1843–49, Stewart 1893–97.
7. The Byzantine icon is often compared with a thirteenth-century Pisan panel of the saint. See Krüger 1992, pp. 65–67; Belting 1994, pp. 377, 380; Peers 2004, pp. 82–83.
8. All Catherine's relics, except a skull and a hand, were transported to France, where they were peddled at Rouen by a Sinai monk known as Symeon the Five-Tongued. See Amantos 1953, pp. 29–31, 34.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 166, and vol. 2, pp. 147–49; Mouriki 1990, pp. 114–15, 173, fig. 46; Nancy P. Ševčenko in New York 2004, pp. 341–43, no. 201.


ΚΑΤΕ
ΡΙΝ

56 | Saint Catherine with the Virgin of the Burning Bush

Thirteenth century, Sinai

Tempera and metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

38.1 × 29 × 2.9 cm (15 × 11 7/16 × 1 1/8 in.)

INSCRIBED

Η Α(γία) ΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ (Saint Catherine); Μ(ήτη)Ρ [Θεοῦ] (Mother of God); ΠΡΟΦ(ήτης) ΜΩΥCIC (Prophet Moses)

CONDITION

Decoration to Saint Catherine's *loros* is square-cut silver leaf. Christ's halo and details of costume also created with cut metal leaf. Catherine's and Virgin's halos are both incised and painted. Extensive cracking along right, left, and bottom edges of the image. Varnish and surface dirt have accumulated between raised areas. Front of engaged frame covered with an ochre-color paint.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS ICON PROVIDES THE EARLIEST EXAMPLE in which the three great cult figures of the monastery are combined in one work. Saint Catherine, wearing the imperial *loros* and a crown with *pendulia*, stands beside the Virgin and Child, enveloped in the winding orange flames and green tendrils of the Burning Bush. Mary's pose bears a strong similarity to a series of thirteenth-century Sinai icons of the Virgin Kyriotissa with a saint or prophet.[1] The present panel documents the rising status of Catherine at the monastery; she is represented as visually equivalent to the Virgin and looks outward to accept the devotions of beholders. To the Virgin's right, a diminutive Moses removes his sandal. An inscription identifies the similarly costumed figure to her left, now obscured by the damage to the panel, as a second Moses, raising a hand either to receive the tablets of the Law or to shield his face while in the presence of God.[2]

The Virgin in flames appeared first in the twelfth century, concurrent with the Latin presence in the Holy Land. A late-twelfth-century icon now in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem combines an Annunciation scene with that of Moses before the Burning Bush (see fig. 88).[3] While in Byzantine exegesis, the Burning Bush was understood as a metaphor for the Virgin's purity, the only earlier Byzantine images to express this concept did so obliquely. In two manuscripts of the Homilies of the Monk James from the 1130s, Moses removes his sandals in front of a flaming bush containing a medallion portrait of Christ (see fig. 91).[4] Mary thus appears *as* rather than *in* the Burning Bush. All other twelfth- and thirteenth-century examples showing the Virgin enveloped in, or in proximity to, the flames of the bush can be associated with the Holy Land.[5]

While Catherine holds the cross of martyrdom and turns her left palm outward, as in Byzantine depictions, she wears an emperor's *loros*, not an empress's *thorakion*.[6] The relative size of the Moses figures presents one of the more curious elements of this composition; such a reduced scale would typically be reserved for a donor figure rather than a prophet and the primary figure with whom the site was associated. The oddities of Catherine's costume, the relative prominence of the saint in this composition, and most particularly, the appearance of this highly specific Burning Bush imagery are aspects of the individualized visual language developed at Sinai and suggest that the icon was painted there.[7]

KC

56, reverse

NOTES

1. See cat. no. 52, Moses and the Virgin Kyriotissa.
2. The two images of Moses before the Burning Bush and Moses receiving the Law are paired in the apse mosaics of the church, on the arms of the sixth-century Moses Cross, as well as in two early-thirteenth-century icons at the monastery (cat. no. 51 and fig. 131).
3. Huber 1980, pp. 184–88 and pl. 146. Moses appears twice before the Virgin, who is seated at the center of the flaming bush. An angel gestures to the Virgin, who holds a spindle and is shown with a bust medallion of the Christ child on her breast.
4. *The Homilies on the Life of the Virgin by the Monk James*, Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 54v, and Paris gr. 1208, fol. 73v. See Stornajolo 1910, p. 11, pl. 21. Omont 1927.
5. A twelfth-century fresco of the Virgin and Child in Tripoli showed the central figures flanked by angels and two flames—references to the burning bush—while on the frame of a thirteenth-century Crusader diptych at the monastery an orant Virgin can be seen entwined in the flaming bush. For the Tripoli fresco, Church of Mart Barbara, Barghoun (destroyed in 1997) see Dodd 2004, pl. 24, no. 7; for the diptych of Saint Procopius and the Virgin Kykkotissa, Mouriki 1990, p. 190, fig. 65.
6. A similar costume worn by Catherine in a thirteenth-century icon of Catherine and Marina at the monastery led Kurt Weitzmann to attribute this to the unfamiliarity of the Western artist with proper imperial attire. See Weitzmann 1966b, p. 73, fig. 50.
7. Weitzmann 1974, pp. 53–54, fig 51.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1966b; Weitzmann 1974; Tzvetkova-Ivanova 2000; Drandaki 2004; N. P. Ševčenko 2006; and N. P. Ševčenko forthcoming.

57 Saint Catherine

Martinus of Villanova

1387, Barcelona or Majorca(?)

Tempera and gold over red bole on panel

127.3 × 56.5 × 4.1 cm (50⅛ × 22¼ × 1⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED

Lower left: S(ancta) CATERINA (Saint Catherine); bottom register: Aquest(a) retaula, sia fer.lo honrat, e(n) Be(r)nat M(ar)esa, ciutada de Barch(ino)na. Consol. De. Cathalans. En Domans en l'an M.CCC.LXXXVII (This retable, made for the honorable Bernardo of Maresa, citizen of Barcelona and consul of the Catalans in Damascus in the year 1387); on reverse: MARTIN(us) D(e) VILANOVA PINXIT (Martinus of Villanova painted it).

CONDITION

Extensive restoration in face and robe. Varnish slightly discolored, contributing to matte appearance of surface. Incised lines on gold were used to delineate contours of painted figure and wheel. Appears that artist adjusted contours of figure during painting process; reduction in the contours of the figure were covered with gold leaf. Punchwork (created with two round-shaped tools of different sizes) creates entire design of background; characterized by skips and dense dots. Crown decoration created by colored glazes and punchwork over gold. Frame added later.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

NOTES

1. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 4554; Delehaye 1902, pp. 123–24. The tenth-century Sacramentary of Mont-Saint-Michel also lists the missa de Sancta Katerina. Bibliothèque Municipale Rouen, Ms. sup 116.
2. Duelt (2004, p. 365) cites early-fifteenth-century visits to Catalonia, made by Sinai monks seeking economic support from the kings of Aragon.
3. See, for example, the fourteenth-century panel of Saints Catherine and Bartholomew attributed to Allegretto Nuzi; Davies 1988, pp. 1–2, pl. 1.
4. The skin tones do not appear to have been created with the Italian verdaccio technique, using a green underlayer, but instead the greenish tint has been created using this pigment throughout. I thank Tiarna Doherty for her careful observations of this work during study trips undertaken for this exhibition.
5. Duelt 2004, pp. 366–69. At top right, the coat of arms is not clear. Divided by a cross, the second and third quarters bear the royal bars, while traces of blue pigment in the first and fourth quarters of the shield suggest that they may have borne the coat of arms of the city of Majorca.

REFERENCES

Pijoan 1907; Soler i Palet 1912; Cuoyat-Barthoux 1913–14; Manafis 1990, p. 200, fig. 73; Mouriki 1990, pp. 121–23; Duelt 2004.

THIS ALTAR PANEL SHOWS A GRACEFULLY POSED CATHERINE in the International Gothic style. She holds the palm of martyrdom in her right hand while resting her left hand on the wheel at her side. Western devotion to the saint can be documented as early as the ninth century with her inclusion in an index of saints' *passio* in a manuscript in Munich, while her cult grew in Normandy perhaps as early as the eleventh century in response to the relics said to have been brought to the monastery of the Blessed Trinity during the rule of Abbot Isambert.[1] Despite the execution of this work in Italianate style and the prominence of the characteristic Western iconographic element of the spiked wheel, this panel provides a rare example of a Western work whose commission was intimately tied to the holy site of Sinai, rather than the broader cult of Catherine in the West.

The Catalan consul to Damascus, Bernardo Maresa, commissioned this work in 1387, in the period just preceding that in which Barcelona came to rival Venice as a primary point of departure for travelers to the Holy Land. In the kingdom of Aragon, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the large number of church and altar dedications to Catherine testify to the importance of her cult, while the kings of Aragon demonstrated their support for the monastery more concretely through regular donations.[2] This work stands as a testament, therefore, not merely to the particular devotion to Catherine in fourteenth-century Catalonia but to the reverence this monastery inspired among the faithful of the Latin West.

No evidence remains of the painter, Martinus de Vilanova; his name was not mentioned in any workshops as either apprentice or assistant. The Italian influence on this work can be seen in Catherine's robe of luxurious blue brocade,[3] modeled after Persian silks, and the green cast to Catherine's skin tones.[4] The artist's name suggests that he was a Catalan or Majorcan artist trained in the Sienese style. Daniel Duelt has suggested that the coat of arms indicates a Majorcan provenance.[5] The limited tools used to create the somewhat haphazard punch work also support the idea that this work, though delicately modeled, was not a product of one of the sophisticated ateliers of the capital.

KC

57, detail

58 | Triptych with Virgin of the Burning Bush and the Burial of Saint Catherine

Sixteenth century(?), Crete(?)

Tempera and gold on panel

Closed: 63.1 × 41.3 × 8.6 cm
(24 13/16 × 16 1/4 × 3 3/8 in.)

INSCRIBED

Interior: center panel, top left: ΟΡΑCΙC ΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΦΙΤΟΥ ΜΩΥCΕΩC (Vision of the prophet Moses); top right: ΔΕΧΟΜΕΝΟC ΤΟΝ ΝΟΜΟΝ ΥΠΟ ΧΕΙΡΟC Κ(υρίο)Υ (Receiving the Law from the hand of the Lord); bottom: Η ΑΓΙΑ ΑΙΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ ΚΥΔΕΥΟΜΕΝΗ ΥΠΟ Τ(ῶν) ΑΓΓΕΛ[ων] (Saint Catherine interred by angels); left panel, top: Ο ΑΓ(ιος) ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟ-ΜΟC (Saint John the Forerunner [the Baptist]); on scroll: ΜΕΤΑΝΟΕΙΤΕ ΗΓΓΙΚΕΝ [γὰρ] Η ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΩΝ (Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand [MATT. 3:2]); bottom: Ο ΑΓ(ιος) ΙΑΚΩΒΟC (Saint James); right panel, top: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΑΝΔΡΕΑC (Saint Andrew); bottom: Ο ΑΓ(ιος) ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟC (Saint Anthony); on scroll: ΙΔΟΝ ΕΓΩ ΤΑC ΠΑΓΙΔΑC ΤΟΥ ΔΙ(α)ΒΟΛΟΥ ΗΠΛΩΜΕΝΑC ΕΝ ΤΗ ΓΗ (I saw the traps of the devil spread out over the earth). Exterior: left panel, top: S. CATERINA (Saint Catherine); bottom: S. MARTINUS (Saint Martin); right panel, top: S. MOYSES (Saint Moses); bottom: S. ANDREAS APL'S (Saint Andrew the apostle)

CONDITION

Excellent condition. Varnish on panels is slightly uneven overall. Incised halos. Carved and painted (over gilding) wooden strips applied over engaged frame of central panel. Exterior sides of triptych box have mortise-and-tenon joins; design motifs incised, carved, and punched. Front cover of box, in forground, has dark blue/black paint, while borders are stained with a mauve-colored paint.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

EVENTS FROM TWO MOMENTS in the sacred history of Mount Sinai are the focus of the central panel of this triptych. In the upper half of the panel, the biblical narrative of Moses receiving the Law of God is depicted in three sequential scenes, all set within a unified rocky landscape. At the left, Moses is halted by the miraculous appearance of the Burning Bush. Within its flames, the Virgin and Child appear in a mandorla of heavenly light (Θεοτόκος ἡ Βάτος), a sign that this Old Testament miracle prefigures the incarnate Christ. In the center, a kneeling Moses obeys the command to remove his sandals. At the far right, he receives the Law tablets from the hand of God. Though painted—for the most part—in a late Byzantine style, this icon depicts the triad of mountains framing the figures of Moses in the manner of post-Byzantine representations of Mount Sinai. Though the icon is not dated, stylistically it compares to other works produced in the sixteenth century.

The transfer of Saint Catherine's relics to the holy site of Mount Sinai is the subject of the bottom scene of this central panel. Two archangels lower the

58, detail

58, exterior with doors closed

NOTES

1. Weitzmann 1974, pp. 53–55, figs. 54–55.
2. Portable icons were frequently commissioned as private devotional offerings to a sanctuary or holy site: Weitzmann 1974, pp. 53–54.
3. As seen in the photograph published in Forsyth and Weitzmann 1965, pl. 98, fig. A.
4. In contrast to the interior panel paintings, the exterior incised drawings feature inscriptions in Latin script. We can only speculate as to whether the exterior decorations were added later at the request of a Latin donor.

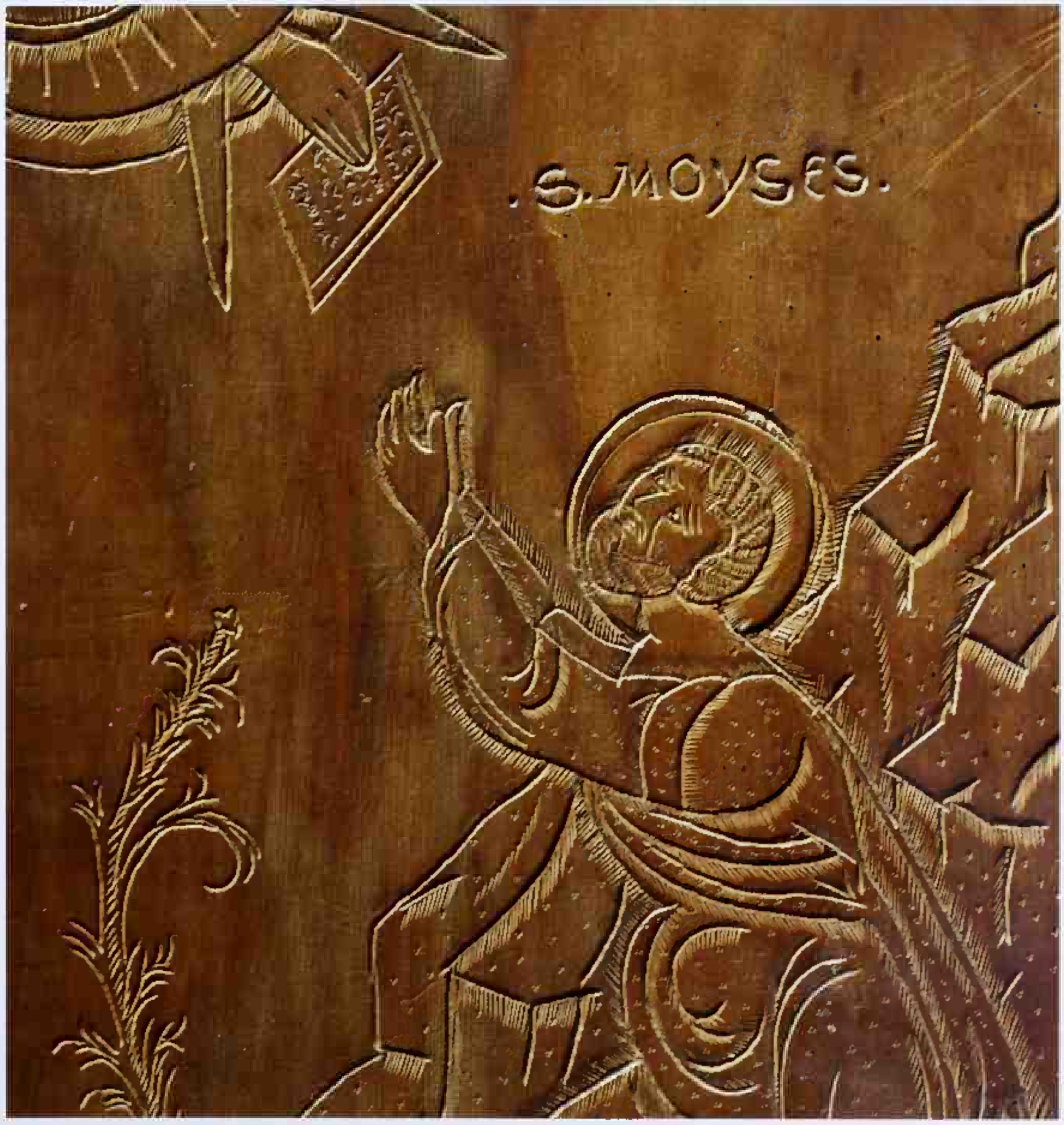
REFERENCE

George Galavaris in *Hiera Monē Sina* 2001, entry for November

body of the saint—clad in crown and imperial robes, her corpse uncorrupted—onto a funerary slab set within this same, three-peaked mountainous landscape. This scene, together with those of Moses above, are frequently found in *locus sanctus* images made for pilgrims to the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai.[1]

Such imagery suggests that the triptych was made at the Sinai monastery, perhaps as a votive offering from a private donor.[2] The four standing saints on the side wings, especially Saint James on the left panel, may also have had special meaning for this site, for the icon is now kept in the chapel dedicated to Saint James.[3] When the triptych is closed, the exterior panels show incised decoration of a different, and likely later, workshop;[4] these carved images include a standing portrait of Saint Catherine and a repeated scene of Moses receiving the Law.

AV



58 (left), detail of side showing symbols of the Passion

58 (above), detail of exterior panel with Moses receiving the Law

59 The Virgin of the Burning Bush

Michael Damaskenos

Last quarter of the sixteenth century, Crete or Venice

Tempera and gold on panel

111 × 89 × 2.9 cm (43⅝ × 35 × 1⅛ in.)

INSCRIBED

Main inscription, left and right: ΟΡΑCΙC ΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΟΥ ΜΩΥCΕΟC Η ΑΓΙΑ ΒΑΤΟC (Vision of the prophet Moses the Holy Vatos [Virgin of the Burning Bush]); far left: ΤΟ ΟΡΟC ΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΟΥ ΜΩΗCΕΟC (The mountain of the prophet Moses); center left: ΕΚ ΠΕΤΡΑC ΥΔΟΡ ΕΠΟΤΙCΕΝ . . . (Water from the rock quenched [the people] . . .); above head of Virgin: Μ(ήτη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); center right: ΚΑΙ ΕΠΟΙΗCΑΝ ΜΟCΧΟΝ ΕΝ ΧΩΝ(ε)Β [τον] (And they fashioned a calf in cast metal); far right: ΤΟ ΟΡΟC ΤΗC Α(γίας) ΑΙΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΗC (The mountain of Saint Catherine); bottom left-hand corner: ΠΟΙΗΜΑ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΔΑΜΑCΚΗΝΟΥ (Made by Michael Damaskenos); flanking head of John of Damascus: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΔΑΜΑCΚΗΝΟC (Saint John of Damascus); on scroll: ΓΑΡ ΠΑΘΕΝ Η CΚΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΝΟΜΟΥ ΤΗC ΧΑΡΙΤΟC ΕΛΘΟΥCΗC ΩC ΓΑΡ Η ΒΑΤΟC ΟΥΚ ΕΚΑΙΕ ΤΟ ΚΑΤΑΦΛΕΓΟΜΕΝΗ ΟΥΤΩ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC ΕΤΕΚΕC Κ(αι) ΠΑΡΦΕΝΟC ΕΜΕΙΝΑC (For the shadow of the Law, having come from grace, came forth. Just as the Burning Bush was not consumed by fire, so too you, Virgin, gave birth, and a Virgin you remained.)

CONDITION

Good condition overall. Abrasion to gold in halos and backround reveals red bole beneath. Halos have been incised with a double line. Details including chrysography in Christ's robe and angels in cloud around God the Father created with gold paint. Landscape details and figures incised into gold ground and then painted. Cleaning strip on lower left edge reveals darkened varnish layer prior to 1991 cleaning; a new coat of varnish was applied at this time. Several vertical cracks run through the right side, while scattered surface areas throughout show evidence of consolidation.

Collection of Saint Catherine of Sinai, Iráklion, Crete

THIS PORTABLE ICON, signed by the prominent Cretan painter Michael Damaskenos,[1] depicts Moses' encounters with the divine on Mount Sinai. On the left Moses stands before the Burning Bush, out of whose flames an angel appears, and below he removes his sandals. At the center of the icon, the Virgin holding the Christ child is enthroned within the Burning Bush (Θεοτόκος ἡ Βάτος). Her presence derives from the commentaries of the Byzantine theologian John of Damascus, who compared the bush unconsumed by fire to the Mother of God.[2] In the lower right-hand corner of the panel, the theologian himself gazes on the vision described on his scroll. Above are the scenes of the golden calf and of angels bringing Saint Catherine's body to the Jebel Katrina, one of the three peaks at Sinai.

The Virgin and Child and Moses before the Burning Bush follow Byzantine religious iconography.[3] In contrast, the scene of Moses receiving the Law includes the Western figure of God the Father, whose representation was avoided in earlier Byzantine art.[4] Such skillful combination of Byzantine and Renaissance forms characterizes post-Byzantine Cretan painting.

This icon belongs to the Collection of Saint Catherine of Sinai in Crete, which was once a *metocheion*, or dependency, of the main monastery in Egypt.[5] It probably served as a *locus sanctus* image and was based on contemporary prints.[6] Painted icons and, later, lithographs of this type were produced as votive objects and souvenirs for pilgrims to the holy site.[7]

AV

NOTES

1. The bibliography on Michael Damaskenos is extensive. Sources include M. Chatzidakis 1950; M. Chatzidakis 1985, pp. 101–2; Xyngopoulos 1957, pp. 136–59.
2. Kotter 1975, pp. 119–20. See also Kotter 1988, p. 492.
3. This figural grouping is comparable to another icon by Damaskenos, of the Virgin Brephokratousa in Corfu. See Vokotopoulos 1983, p. 43 n. 46, pl. 2, fig. 1, M. Chatzidakis 1987, p. 245, no. 72, fig. 122.
4. This contrast was noted by Sergio Bettini, who dated the icon to Damaskenos's stay in Venice (1574–79), when the artist decorated the church of San Giorgio dei Greci; Bettini 1934–35, pp. 356–57. Andreas Xyngopoulos similarly found an "Italian" influence in Damaskenos's figure of God the Father, which he compared to Michelangelo's Creator in the Sistine Chapel; Xyngopoulos 1957, p. 150. Nevertheless, he dated the icon to after Damaskenos's return to Crete in 1584, Xyngopoulos 1957, pp. 153–54.
5. The icon had previously belonged to the nearby Vrondisi Monastery in Crete. Around the year 1800, it was given to the *metocheion*, along with four other icons by Michael Damaskenos; Doulgerakis 1958, p. 169.
6. Teuffel 1995, p. 165.
7. Weitzmann 1974, pp. 53–55, figs. 54–55.

REFERENCES

Bettini 1934–35, pp. 356–57, fig. 1; Xyngopoulos 1957, pp. 147, 149–54, pl. 41, fig. 1; Doulgerakis 1958, p. 169; Kreidl-Papadopoulos 1970, p. 100, fig. 78; Lydakis 1976; M. Chatzidakis 1987, p. 245, no. 52.

60 Saint Catherine and Scenes from Her Life

Donato and Gregorio d'Arezzo, Italian (Aretine), act. 1315–ca. 1340

Previous attribution: Master of Saint Cecilia, Italian, act. 1290–1320, or follower

ca. 1330, Italy (Arezzo)

Tempera and gold leaf on panel

Unframed: 100 × 170.2 cm (39⅜ × 67 in.); framed: 113.3 × 180.7 × 10.2 cm (44⅝ × 71⅛ × 4 in.)

CONDITION

Fair condition. Early in the twentieth century the painting was transferred from its original wooden support to a new one, resulting in numerous small losses in the egg-tempera paint layers. Strong cleanings abraded the flesh tones and the gilded background. Saint Catherine's blue drapery and red cloak are largely intact, however, as are other areas throughout the painting, including the areas of original gold, with incised decoration.

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (73.PB.69)

NOTES

1. Van Os 1984, pp. 12–13.
2. Weitzmann 1984, pp. 159–60, fig. 23. Weitzmann gives as one example the thirteenth-century dossal in the Museo Nationale in Pisa, in which the Virgin, Christ, and John the Baptist—the figures traditionally located at the center of Byzantine templon beams—are flanked by Saints Catherine and Silvester.
3. Gardner 1994, pp. 10–11.
4. Schmidt 2001. Schmidt writes that the earliest version of this story comes from the Cistercian monastery of Kaisheim near Donauwoerth but suggests that it must have circulated earlier in Italy as well as in Germany (p. 22 n. 8). For a translation of this manuscript, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cod. 7954, fol. 313v–316v, see Varnhagen 1891, pp. 18–23.
5. The panel, now in the Museo Nationale in Pisa, has been discussed in comparison to the vita icon by Weitzmann 1984, pp. 154–55, and Ševčenko, p. 153. The dossal, in the National Gallery in London, shows the Virgin and Child Enthroned, flanked by scenes of the Nativity and the lives of saints. M. Davies 1988, pp. 67–68, pl. 51.

REFERENCES

Boskovits and Gregori 1984, pp. 20–21, n. 41 (for published documentation of reattribution); Van Os 1984; Fehm Jr. 1986, p. 40; Offner 1986, pp. 9–10, 24, 28, 202–209, pls. 18, 18(5); M. Davies 1988, pp. 67–68, plate 51; Gardner 1994; and Schmidt 2001, p. 26, fig. 1.

THIS LARGE DOSSAL, which would have been placed on the altar in Italian churches, depicts Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Dressed as a Western noblewoman, she holds the palm of her martyrdom and a book symbolizing her knowledge.

The dossal derives its form from painted panels, or antependia, that decorated the fronts of altars. After the Lateran Council of 1215 the priest celebrated the Eucharist with his back to the congregation. As a result, during the thirteenth century, painted antependia were moved to the top of the altar, forming a backdrop for and a delineation of the altar space.[1] Although early altar panels absorbed formal elements from Byzantine templon beams,[2] the principal function of the altar panels was to identify the saint to whom the altar was dedicated.[3]

Several of the subsidiary scenes that appear to the left and right of the central figure refer to the version of the life and martyrdom of Saint Catherine popularized in Germany and Italy in the late-thirteenth and fourteenth century.[4] This version of Catherine's story includes an account wholly absent in Byzantine versions—the mystic marriage of Saint Catherine, who refused to marry a man who could not equal her in nobility, wisdom, and wealth. A hermit gave Catherine a small panel painting of the Virgin and Child with the instruction to pray to the Virgin to reveal her bridegroom. Through her prayer before this image and her appeal to the intermediary figure of the Virgin, Catherine was able to achieve her mystic union with Christ. This work thus reflects the primacy of images of the Virgin and Child in Italian art and devotion of the Middle Ages.

Unlike the Byzantine vita icon of Saint Catherine herein (see cat. no. 55), the final scene of Catherine's beheading shows angels laying her body to rest on a mountaintop. This element was included in a mid-thirteenth-century panel painting from Pisa and a slightly later dossal by the artist Margarito d'Arezzo (Italian, ca. 1216–ca. 1290).[5]

KC

60, detail

61 Triptych with Scenes of the Old and New Testaments

El Greco (Greek, 1541–1614)

1569/70, Venice

Tempera on panel

Closed: 37 × 23.8 cm (14⅝ × 9⅜ in.); open: 37 × 60 cm (14⅝ × 23⅝ in.) and 37 × 51.5 cm (14⅝ × 20¼ in.)

INSCRIBED

Center back panel, across the top of the scene: **TO AΓION KAI ΘEOBAΔICTON OPOC TO CINEON** (The holy and God-trodden Mount Sinai); on the hill to the right of the monastery of Saint Catherine: **XEIP ΔOMHNIKOY** (By the hand of Domenikos)

CONDITION

The front is pristine. On the back, paint loss to the Adam and Eve panel has exposed yellow areas in several places. The crack across the lower edge of the central scene of Mount Sinai is intentional, constituting the division between the independent central panel and the frame.

Galleria Estense, Modena, Italy

THIS SMALL TRIPTYCH FOR PERSONAL DEVOTION incorporates a scene of Moses at Mount Sinai into a visually and theologically sophisticated design. When the triptych is closed, the six panels reduce to two scenes of the Old Law—on the back, God giving Moses the Law on the mountaintop, and on the front, God speaking to Adam and Eve after Eve was created from Adam's side. Opening the first of the two wings reveals the grace of the New Dispensation: Mary as the new Eve in the Annunciation in the center and the Adoration of Shepherds at the left. Turning aside the inner wing exposes the narrative continuation, the Baptism on the right, and in the center a Counter-Reformation image of a triumphant Christ crowning a Christian knight, a bishop with a tall miter celebrating mass, and devils forcing the damned into a hell mouth (detail, below).[1]

Recent scholarship has resolved the once-contested attribution to El Greco (Domenikos Theotokopoulos, 1541–1614).[2] Still unresolved, however, is whether El Greco painted the triptych in Crete, or, more likely, after his immigration to Venice in 1567/68 under the strong impact of Venetian engravings. The triptych combines the coloration and dramatic settings of Venetian masters with the iconography of European prints. The central scene on the obverse, for example, adds details of the Last Judgment to a Counter-Reformation subject.[3] On the opposite side (see next page), the view of Mount Sinai derives from an engraving of Giovanni Battista Fontana that was printed in Venice in 1569 and suggests that El Greco painted the triptych there before moving to Rome in 1570.[4] Yet the gilded wooden frame resembles those of other Cretan icons of the period (see cat. no. 59) and points to the transitional character of the triptych.

61 (below), detail of central panel

61 (above), reverse

61 (opposite), detail of central panel, reverse, showing Saint Catherine's monastery at the base of Mount Sinai

El Greco painted the Sinai again in a somewhat larger and slightly later panel in Iráklion that can be traced back to the collection of Fulvio Orsini, the humanist adviser to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in Rome (fig. 126). In both views, pilgrims approach the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, nestled at the base of two mountains, but the Iráklion version lacks the narrative details of this earlier panel and constitutes an independent landscape, yet another genre of Western painting that El Greco absorbed.[5] The imaginative narrative of this earlier view foreshadows the expressionistic narratives of his later Spanish period.

In this triptych, the clouds part at the top of Mount Sinai and God descends in a flash of yellow to give Moses two white tablets, as the divine energy strikes the dramatically darkened mountain. Unlike in the later topographical view of the Sinai precincts (cat. no. 43), the early Byzantine stairs (see fig. 8) do not continue up the length of the mountain and thus render Moses' presence at the summit yet more miraculous. A shaft of light illumines the site of the Burning Bush, and angels deposit the body of Saint Catherine of Alexandria on the mountain at the right—details absent from the Iráklion version but common to the tradition represented by the later Sinai view (see cat. no. 43). El Greco's version visualizes the site for those—like the painter himself—who never made the pilgrimage he depicts. In the process a living sacred place becomes a beautiful, but dead, landscape.[6]

RSN

NOTES

1. Miesel 1953; D. Davies 2003, pp. 45–46.
2. See the excellent analysis of the scholarly literature by Maria Vassilaki in Iráklion 1990, pp. 156–59, 337–39.
3. A. G. Xydis 1995, pp. 142–43.
4. Constantoudaki 1975; Bray and Oliver 2003, pp. 32–33.
5. Teuffel 1995.
6. On these later illustrations, see Kühnel 1981.

REFERENCES
Maria Vassilaki in Iráklion 1990, pp. 156–85, 337–49; Vassilaki 1995.

Glossary

Akathistos Hymn (from Gr. *akathistos*, "not seated"): sermon in verse sung in honor of the Mother of God while the congregation stands

Akra Tapeinosis (Gr., "utmost humiliation"): representation of the dead Christ on the cross, known in the West as the Imago Pietatis, or Man of Sorrows

acheiropoietos (Gr., "not made by hand"): an image of miraculous origin and/or possessing miraculous properties

ambon: platform in the nave of a church from which, in early Christian times, lections were read and the liturgy was opened and closed

Amnos (Gr., "lamb"): epithet for Christ, referring to his aspect as sacrificial lamb; also denotes the central portion of the consecrated bread, which becomes Christ's body during the liturgy

analabos: part of a monastic habit, a sleeveless vest

analogion: lectern or stand on which books in the early Christian period were placed

Anastasis (Gr., "resurrection"): depiction of Christ bursting open the gates of Hades and releasing figures from the Old Testament; Easter image of the Orthodox Church; one of the twelve Great Feasts

argyrokentema (Gr., "silver embroidery"): silk thread with thin strips of silver loosely wound around it. *See also* chrysokentema

Ascension: feast of Christ's ascent into heaven; represented in art with Christ in a *mandorla*, surrounded by angels, rising over the twelve apostles with Mary at their center

augusta: title reserved for the Byzantine empress

augustos: one of the titles for the Byzantine emperor

autocephalus (from Gr. *auto*, "self," and *kephale*, "head"): referring to an ecclesiastical province with a right to nominate its own bishop

autokrator (Gr., "absolute ruler"): one of the titles for the Byzantine emperor, used with other imperial titles, such as *basileus* and *augustos*

basileus (Gr., "king"): principal title for the Byzantine emperor

bema (Gr., "raised step"): sanctuary in the eastern part of the church, containing the altar and accessible only to the clergy

Canon Tables: system of concordance to the Gospels, devised by Eusebios of Cesarea in the fourth century

cathedra: bishop's throne in the center of the apse

chiton (Gr., "tunic"): wool, linen, or cotton tunic; basic garment of most citizens of the Byzantine empire

chlamys (Gr., "mantle"), *pl.* **chlamydes:** long cloak fastened at the right shoulder; originally part of military costume, later an element of courtly attire

choros: polygonal structure suspended from a dome, carrying *polykandela*, or lamps and candles; introduced in the twelfth century

chrysokentema (Gr., "gold embroidery"): silk thread with thin strips of gold foil loosely wound around it. *See also* argyrokentema

ciborium: domed or pyramidal structure erected on columns over saints' tombs or over an altar (symbolizing the tomb of Christ)

codex: ancient manuscript text in book form; modern book form

coenobitic (from Gr. *koinobion*, "common life"): referring to monasteries in which monks or nuns follow a communal way of life; *coenobitic* monks and nuns adhere to the same schedule, eat together, own communal property and answer to the *hegoumenos*

Coptic: referring to Copts, Egypt's Orthodox Christian population; final stage of ancient Egyptian language, now used only as the liturgical language of the Coptic Church

Deesis (Gr., "entreaty"): representation of Christ between the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist, who interact with Christ on the viewer's behalf

dekanos: secondary Roman officer; later a title often used to denote an imperial messenger, but applied to a variety of other positions

despot (Gr., "lord," "master"): honorary court title of the Byzantine Empire; introduced in the twelfth century to refer to officials second in rank only to the emperor

despotic icon: one of the large icons located in the lower portion of an *iconostasis*, or icon screen, on either side of the royal doors

diakonikon: sacristy room where sacred vessels are kept, usually to the right of the bema in a Byzantine church; also known as *skenophylakion*

diakonos: deacon

diskokalymma: protective veil placed over the liturgical paten with the sacrament

Docetism: view that Jesus was a divine being who only appeared to be human, explicitly branded as a heresy by Ignatius

dodekaorton: liturgical cycle of the twelve Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church

ekphrasis (Gr., "description"): formal description used to visually evoke the described object or event

enkolpion (Gr., "on the bosom"): object worn around the neck, containing Christian imagery, a sacred relic, or inscription

epimanikia: embroidered cuffs worn over the sleeves of some priestly garments

epistyle: beam of a Byzantine templon

epitaphios: large liturgical cloth symbolically interpreted as the bier of Christ, often embroidered with an image of the dead Christ

epitrachelion: stole worn by a priest during the liturgy

Eucharist: a sacrament and the central act of worship in many Christian churches; the bread and wine that are mystically transformed into the body and blood of Christ on the altar

gammata: ornaments shaped like the Greek letter "gamma," which stands for numeral three and refers to the Trinity

Great Feasts. *See* dodekaorton

hagiasma: holy fountain, holy water, or holy spring (referring to sources of miraculous water)

hagios (Gr.): holy, sacred, saint

hegoumenos, *f.* **hegoumenissa**: superior of a monastery

hesychasm (from Gr. *hesuchia*, "calm," "peace," "recollection"): state of mind appropriate for the contemplation of God; a spiritual current that stressed the importance of achieving this state; often used in reference to those who had abandoned the world to dedicate themselves to contemplation of God and to living in solitude

hieromonk: a monk who is also a priest

himation: an outer garment originally worn by the ancient Greeks over the left shoulder and under the right; in Byzantium the dark cotton mantle worn by monks

homiliary: book of homilies

homily: sermon

horologion: liturgical book of hours, with a schedule of daily prayer

hosios (Gr.): holy, sacred, saint

icon (from Gr. *eikon*, "image"): representation of a sacred figure or event; in a narrow sense, a portable devotional panel

Iconoclasm (in relation to Byzantine art): imperially sanctioned religious movement of the eighth and ninth centuries that denied the holiness of icons and rejected icon veneration

iconophile (Gr., "image lover"): defender of icons and icon veneration, a term coined during the period of Iconoclasm

iconostasis: icon-bearing structure that separates the sanctuary from the nave in Orthodox churches. *See also* templon

idiorrhythmic (from Gr. *idiorrhythmos*, "self-regulating"): referring to an individualized form of monastic life in which monks can acquire personal property, earn income, and eat meat; *idiorrhythmic* monks are administered by an oligarchic council (*synaxis*), rather than falling under the absolute authority of a *hegoumenos*

Imago Pietatis. *See* Akra Tapeinosis

incipit (L., "[here] begins"): opening section of a manuscript, early printed book, or chanted liturgical text

katholikon: main church in a monastic complex

Koimesis (Gr., "dormition"): feast of the death (or "falling asleep") of the Virgin Mary

lection: liturgical reading drawn from the bible

lectionary: book containing *lections* to be read during liturgical services

liturgy (from Gr. *leitourgia*, "service"): ceremonial church service, most often the Eucharist

loros: a long scarf usually studded with gems, worn by an emperor or empress; the empress's loros was sometimes arranged to look like a shield, and the shieldlike part was once mistakenly believed to be a separate part termed *thorakion*

mandorla (Ital., "almond"): art historical term for the almond-shaped halo that surrounds an entire figure to indicate the presence of the divine

maniakion, *pl.* **maniakia:** a kind of neck ring or collar; indicating army rank; often an attribute to military saints

Melchite (also *Melkite, Mlqe*): member of the Eastern Orthodox (Chalcedonian) Church in Syria and Egypt (generally dominated by Monophysites)

Menologion, *pl.* **menologia:** collection of saints' lives arranged according to the church calendar

metropolitan: head bishop of an ecclesiastical territory that coincides with a civil province; sometimes interchangeable with *archbishop*

Monophysitism (from Gr. *monos*, "one," and *physis*, "nature"): doctrine holding that there is only one nature in Christ, not two

Nestorianism: doctrine emphasizing that Christ consists of two separate persons, one divine and one human, not one person both divine and human

neume: note or group of notes to be sung as a single syllable

nomina sacra: Christian sacred names, usually written in abbreviated form

Pantokrator (Gr., "All-sovereign"): epithet for Christ; in art, the frontal representation of a stern, dark-bearded Christ who blesses with his right hand and holds a Gospel book in his left

Pascha: Easter
paschal: relating to Easter
pendoulia or **prependoulia:** hanging ornaments on a Byzantine crown
Pentecost (Gr., "fiftieth day"): one of the twelve Great Feasts; the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles
pintel: pin or bolt on which a rudder or other part turns
prefiguration, or **typos** (Gr., "form" or "type"): establishment of Old Testament prototypes for New Testament figures and events
proconsul: Roman title given to a former consul (supreme magistrate) denoting governorship of special provinces
proskynesis: gesture of supplication or reverence, ranging from full prostration to genuflection, bow, or simple greeting
proskynetarion: oratory; in modern, conventional usage, denoting the monumental icon of Christ, the Virgin, or the patron saint of a church; a stand for icons

rinceau: ornament consisting of a continuous foliate scroll with spirals alternately reversing direction

semantron: long instrument made of iron, bronze, or wood, struck by a hammer to summon monks and nuns to services
skeuophylakion. *See* diakonikon
skeuophylax (Gr., "keeper of the vessels"): a cleric, usually a priest, appointed to look after the sacred valuables and liturgical vessels of a church
solidus: Byzantine gold coin
sticharion: long tunic with sleeves worn by higher ranking orders of the clergy
streptos. *See* maniakion
synaxarion: church calendar of fixed feasts with the appropriate readings from the Bible indicated for each one; can also denote a specific collection of brief notices, not always hagiographical
synaxis: an assembly, usually of monastic Fathers; Holy Council

templon: screen that separates the nave from the sanctuary
tessera, *pl.* **tesserae:** small cube used in the construction of mosaics; can be made of various materials, such as glass or stone
Theopaschitism: variant of Monophysitism; belief that God suffered in the flesh
Theotokos (Gr., "Godbearer"): epithet officially assigned to the Virgin Mary at the council of Ephesos in 431 that identifies her as the Mother of God
thorakion. *See* loros
threnos (Gr.): lament
Triodion: book of hymns for the services of the movable Lenten and Easter cycles
Trisagion (Gr., "thrice-holy [hymn]"): "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us," a chant sung at the beginning of Eucharist and during other liturgical processions
troparion: earliest form of Byzantine hymn; originally a short prayer in rhythmic prose, later strophic and more closely connected to individual feasts; a stanza, an inserted set of lines
typos: *See* prefiguration
typikon: book delineating administrative organization and rules of behavior of a *coenobitic* monastery, including instruction for religious services

Virgin Blachernitissa: image of the Virgin and Child associated with the Blachernai church in Constantinople
Virgin Dexiokratousa (Gr., "right-handed"): variant of the Hodegetria type in which the Virgin holds the Christ child on her right arm
Virgin Eleousa (Gr., "compassionate"): image with Mary bending to tenderly touch her cheek to the cheek of the infant Christ, who puts his arm around her neck
Virgin Glykophilousa (Gr., "sweetly kissing"): term applied to the Virgin Eleousa in post-Byzantine period
Virgin Hodegetria: image of Mary holding the infant Christ on her left arm, Christ grasping a scroll in one hand and making a gesture of blessing with the other; named after the Monastery of Hodegos in Constantinople, where the earliest icon of this type was housed
Virgin Kykkotissa: Cypriot variant of the Eleousa type, in which the Christ child twists to touch Mary's cheek
Virgin Pareklesis ("Intercessor"): image type showing the Virgin almost in profile holding a scroll on which are inscribed the words of a dialogue with Christ in which the Virgin pleads for humankind
vita icon: icon with scenes of a saint's life, usually painted around a central image of the saint

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